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S H A T T E R E D I D O L S.

VOL. II.

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SHATTERED IDOLS.

“What, Dagon up again! I thought we had hurled him
Down on the threshold, never more to rise.
Bring wedge and axe, and neighbours, lend your hands,
And rive the idol into winter fagots.”

Athelstane.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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COVENT GARDEN.

SHATTERED IDOLS.

CHAPTER I.

“ The moon shines dim in the open air,
And not a moonbeam enters here.
But they without its light can see
The chamber carved so curiously,
Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver’s brain,
For a lady’s chamber meet :
The lamp with twofold silver chain
Is fastened to an angel’s feet.”—COLERIDGE.

ANOTHER inmate was about this time added to Villabella’s small household, thereby increasing its expenditure, and animating Leonora to more assiduous exertions. Mons. Villabella’s nephew, Ernest D’Arval, but lately the greatest painter of the day, had from the shock of a sudden calamity, lost his reason. Alone in the world, and with none save these relatives, this poor imbecile

found a home in the humble dwelling of his uncle, where Leonora's tenderness watched over him, and her industry realized the means of his support. Her pencil never traced more successful delineations than now, when benevolence guided it, and that she worked for one who had once surpassed her in the talent inherited from their common ancestors. This thought animated her industry and expedited, from her fertile brain to her dexterous hand, happy suggestions which colder motives could not have originated, while her cousin, whose works she copied, sat quietly beside her, childishly pleased with the varied colours which she used. This poor man's reason had been dislodged by sorrow, but the splendid frame, now tenanted alone by life, still bore an impress of the departed mind. With animal fondness, he followed and watched Leonora, and in some degree helped to protect her father, when she could leave him in no other care. Now the

childish nephew watched the declining old man with instinctive tenderness.

Leonora's wanderings continued; the dark woods enabled her to stray concealed there, and from openings of which she soon discovered the advantage to watch what occurred on the heights behind them. She saw Castelle walking with both young ladies together, and fancied that his preference for Clelia was very apparent. Again, he strolled along the wood paths with Agnes, and then she thought that this elder lady was the confidant who encouraged and sanctioned their attachment.

At last the château seemed deserted; the carriage had conveyed a large party away in the morning. That day Leonora tried to paint, but a strange infatuation drew her again to the spot so often visited, and towards evening she found herself seated upon the stump of a tree, behind the summer-house, above the castle. To her surprise she heard two female voices within it,

but not very distinctly; there were sobs and complaints uttered in a clear, child-like voice; there were comforting words, spoken in less musical tones. She listened more eagerly now, for Clelia's voice had once before been heard—and has not jealousy the ears of Midas and the eyes of Argus? And did she not soon discover that this speaker was her rival? Now, the gentler voice of Clelia declares that death can be her only release from unbearable misery! Leonora's eyes dilate with anxious attention; next a crime is alluded to; then Leonora starts, creeps forward, and bends her head closer to the intervening partition, till she hears much that amazes and yet delights her, for the assurances from Louise that the lover will never know this secret is met with declarations from her companion that she must expiate in a convent the sin of her earlier years. Much more the listener hears, now crouched close to the summer-house, from whence every sound reaches her.

There is a movement within. Leonora creeps back to the tree, behind which she cowers, afraid to move, afraid to breathe, and further transfixed by surprise at the startling revelations which she has just heard.

They are gone, and Leonora rises slowly and walks musingly through the wood, full of thought and project; her impatient, restless nature, for which inaction was pain, would not allow her to remain passive; it had now a new motive, a new object, and taking a circuitous route towards home, before reaching her own door she matured the plan, to be at once enacted.

The night after this strange incident Madame D'Albremont invited some friends of her late husband, from Fontainebleau, where she also engaged a few French officers quartered there to make up a quadrille, or to join in small plays, for the purpose of cheering Clelia, and varying for herself the monotony of country life. She had thus col-

lected a small party, which was assembled in a room looking towards the rocks; its windows were all open, from whence a brilliant light illuminated the outer space, which the sounds of music also reached, giving to the whole scene the gay character that, in such localities, seems enhanced by the adjacent quiet and the rarity of festive pleasures in rural situations. Out streamed the light with a wide range, sending forth long rays which reached the rocks nearest to the house.

As Leonora descended from the wood above, her fierce passions darkened the thoughts which had been dark before, when she saw the bright illumination and heard that beautiful waltz, with which the evening air seemed to undulate as it brought the melodious waves along with its own current. She dared not come within the area of this light, but paused in the distance where but little could be seen of what occurred within the room, now seem-

ing to Leonora a Pandemonium where evil spirits revelled and mocked her with spiteful triumph. There she sat, like Prometheus, upon a projecting rock, gazing at that distant scene with outstretched neck and starting eye-balls, pressing her hand upon her heart, from whence sudden sharp pangs darted through her frame, transfixing it with the cramp of agony.

The lights at last extinguished, the music silent; she still sat there, her throbbing brain heating the life-blood which ran through her parched veins, not even cooled by the chill night that now the rising moon began to enliven. Still she sat watching, when its white light had replaced on the closed windows the yellow radiance that had before illuminated them from within. Rapidly then she walked round the house, looking in at all the windows, and even through one where Clelia sat, unconscious of such a spectator, shrouded in the rich vestment that fell around her of golden hair. Leonora crept

silently to her little bed that night, but never slept. The next, stealthily she entered the open window of a well-known room, and while the party of friends were engaged in their usual social meeting, she laid on Clelia's toilet a small note, of simple appearance, and one that could be read without exciting the notice of an attendant.

Clelia, on perusing its contents, was equally surprised and frightened, for she was requested to meet some one at night, after twelve o'clock, at the log-house, to be informed of circumstances intimately affecting her own happiness, and the welfare of those she loved best.

A lovely day opened on the landscape surrounding the castle; the sun shone brightly into Clelia's window as she arose after a wakeful night, and read once more the letter which she had placed beneath her pillow, and now locked into a box upon her dressing-table. The morning was spent as usual; Castelle, who had not attended the

dance, arrived at mid-day, and in the evening effected some promised mesmeric operations, ostensibly undertaken to initiate his friends in the new mysteries, but in reality to repeat some experiments with which he had already tested his power over Clelia's sympathetic temperament. She was soon put into a trance, and made to do whatever he suggested; and after being brought so entirely under his influence that he seemed to replace her volition by his own, to transfer his sensuous impressions to her organs, she was advised by the interested spectators of these wonders to retire to rest before them, to recover from the fatigue which this exhibition evidently occasioned. Castelle and Agnes led her to her room; the former enjoined perfect and prolonged repose, while Agnes advised Louise to put her gently to bed, and then to leave her in darkness and quiet.

The party in the drawing-room withdrew at the usual time, and half an hour after

midnight all was quiet in the house; no one within its walls saw Clelia flying over the rock path, and disappearing in the plantation above it. None perceived two men ascending from the lower wood, one of whom entered the summer-house, while the other, sitting upon a rock, was entirely concealed within the shadow cast by a large dark fir-tree. Clelia advanced towards the former, and followed him into the inner recess of the structure. There, brief and quiet was the conference between them, and Clelia quitted her strange companion without noticing his associate beyond. The moon shone only fitfully, as she now retraced the path by which she had come, with a faltering step and outstretched arms, trying to avoid some imaginary obstacle that she dreaded, even when the moonlight rendered such fear superfluous.

She entered the window of her room with the step of one bewildered or inebriated, for the recent mesmeric ex-

ciment was now producing its reaction, and she had merely time to pass through the window before she sank, cold and pallid, into a chair fortunately placed near it. On recovering her composure, and recalling the scene just past, she threw herself on her knees, to ask for pity and for pardon.

In the morning Louise found her in an uneasy sleep, and on awaking a head-ache and throbings of the heart afflicted her so severely that Madame D'Albremont insisted that she should remain in bed till the dinner-hour; then, more abstracted than ever, her friends attributed to the experiments of the previous evening the languor of her air and voice, and prescribed early rest as the remedy most likely to restore her. Again that night the two men waited in the same place, and again, not perceiving him who remained outside, Clelia conversed with the other, and secretly as before; but this time not without another witness. Sir Harry

Ashworth, always watchful of what he considered the unaccountable oddity of his niece, noted her anxiety of the previous night, her readiness to retire the next; he saw footprints near her window, in the newly sanded path, which had been laid down at sunset the evening before under her window; and besides these, other indications led him to infer that something unusual was increasing the excitability of Clelia. A racing, sporting character, well versed in stratagems of all sorts, and very expert at detecting the outward evidence of an inner feeling, suspicion led him to mistrust everyone, and to look for evil everywhere. He now watched near Clelia's window, and as she ascended one path to the rocks, he followed her by another, and saw her enter the summer-house with a male companion, while another man guarded the entrance of their retreat. No thought but one most injurious to Clelia occurred to his mind. This, then, was the lover for whose

sake she rejected the rich, the excellent Vivian; and all were the dupes of her affected reserve and artful prudery.

Sir Harry concealed himself near the path by which she had come, to see her descend from her disgraceful rendezvous, which this time, to his surprise, lasted but five minutes; and when she had passed and entered the house, he too returned by the same footway, and moodily reached his room, there to ruminate on the course he was to pursue in this emergency. Long did he ponder over its strangeness, and many were the conjectures he made to solve its mystery. Who could these men be? They did not come from the castle, for they had approached the summer-house in another direction.

Immediately after returning to his room he left it again, to assure himself that Castelle had retired for the night. There was no object in meeting Vivian; who then could have taken advantage of this poor Clelia's inexperience, and instigated a proceeding

which would be considered imprudent anywhere, but in France might ruin the best-established reputation, and consign a young girl to disgrace and seclusion for life? A certain course of proceeding determined on, the baronet composed himself to sleep, well pleased with the happy turn he would give to the family dilemma next day. Clelia kept her room, and Vivian and Castelle returned to Paris. Released therefore from all engagements to these gentlemen, Sir Harry had the day before him, and immediately after breakfast followed his sister into her apartment, and locking the door, proceeded to relate the events of the previous night. At first Madame D'Albremont would not believe his story; she fancied that he had invented it for a joke; then she declared that he imagined what he described, or that Clelia was not the person concerned in the adventure. Vainly did the poor woman try to deceive herself, and to mistrust what he declared to be the evidence of his senses.

At last, when obliged to yield to his asseverations, her conviction was expressed by gesticulations of amazement at Clelia's misconduct, and of equal astonishment at her own want of penetration and vigilance. What was to be done now to avoid the discovery, and to prevent the repetition of this disgraceful rendezvous ?

“Comfort yourself,” said Sir Harry, “I have told you the worst; and although it seems without a remedy, there is one which I can suggest that will turn this affair to good account, and bring about a result for which we are all so anxious.”

“What is it? what can we do?” gasped Madame D’Albremont.

“You must first inform Clelia,” said Sir Harry, “how we have discovered her secret; ascertain from her who the man is that she meets, and after compelling her to dismiss him for ever, threaten her with the probable discovery of the whole affair, the loss of her reputation, and the seclusion of

a convent, in which, as her guardian, you can place her. The alternative must be, an immediate marriage with Vivian to establish her character and to secure her own happiness in life."

"How well thought of," said Madame D'Albremont, brightened by her brother's advice, but annoyed at not having anticipated it; "all this scheme, however, would have occurred to me after the first shock was over. It is an admirable arrangement; but who can this man be?"

"Some fellow who has persecuted her, perhaps. You declared that she was much attached to Vivian; this does not appear to be the case now. What weathercocks women are!"

"You always say so, Harry; but I will stake my life that Clelia worships Vivian, and this it is which renders your project so feasible."

"Well, I leave its execution to you, Constance; you like a plot and a difficulty

to conquer—here is one in which you can exercise your peculiar talent.” So saying, the jaunty baronet placed his hat at the fashionable angle upon his head, and whipped his boots and himself out of the room with a fashionable cane.

CHAPTER II.

“The fruit of sin, goodly and fair to view,
Deceives us in its beauty—plucked it turns
To ashes on our lips.”—WEBSTER.

MADAME D’ALBREMONT sat for some time ruminating upon the strange events which her brother had communicated, and the best plan for effecting his suggestion. She was too good a diplomatist to act without matured consideration under most circumstances; but here promptitude was unavoidable, so after an hour’s delay she proceeded to Clelia’s apartment.

The poor girl looked jaded and miserable, and Madame D’Albremont’s courage failed when she saw her wretched appearance. The anger with which she entered the room was disarmed for a time, and the con-

sequences of the sad affair had to be summed up rapidly in her mind before broaching the subject to the dejected girl beside her. At the first mention of Sir Harry's discovery Clelia sank upon her knees and buried her head in the cushion of a chair near them, while Madame D'Albremont detailed what she had heard from her brother, with a calm, steady voice, and asked Clelia to explain the nature of this strange meeting. To her questions, "Who is this man?—where did you know him?" Clelia made no answers; they were repeated over and over again, and followed by the same silence. At length, on Madame D'Albremont hinting that Vivian would probably hear of the affair, she started up, and catching her mother in a close embrace, besought her to save them from such a calamity.

"You do not know, mother dear, how utterly miserable I am; all that appears wrong in me have I done on his account. I

value his happiness far more than my own, and I would sooner die than that he should entertain a suspicion that I could deceive him. Help me—save me, dear mother!"

Again she clasped Madame D'Albremont in her arms as if this embrace would guard her against all she dreaded. Gradually growing more calm, she listened to that clever lady explaining her views and proposing her plan, but again asking for an explanation of the last night's adventure. Clelia declared that not even to retain Vivian's esteem would she explain more. She promised faithfully never to meet any one in secret again ; and at the close of the interview Madame D'Albremont sought her brother to assure him that Clelia, after a long hesitation, acceded to all she proposed, and that Vivian was to be immediately informed that she consented to become his wife at the expiration of six weeks. Clelia, poor girl, stipulated for this delay in the hope that some circumstance might occur

that would clear away the mystery which hung like a dark cloud over her existence.

Boundless was Vivian's joy when he heard of her concurrence; delight gave his voice a new inflexion, made his step more elastic, and his expression more vivacious; he was like one restored from sickness to health both of mind and body, and his expansive cheeriness seemed to inspire all the party with new animation.

It was with great delight that Louise heard of the arrangements for Clelia's marriage. Sharp as she was, the meeting in the wood had escaped her, and she wondered at this sudden solution to her own perplexities, although confident that some particulars just communicated in a letter from France might, when well explained, effect a change in Clelia's mind.

My readers will have guessed by this time that Marie St. Clair and Clelia D'Albremont were identical, and that Annesley's infamous conduct was the cause

of this poor girl's misery and the only impediment to her union with Vivian.

You will think it strange that Agnes and Clelia should have been such close intimates for months, and yet that each was totally ignorant how the circumstances which were blighting her own life affected the other as prejudicially. But so quietly had Agnes' marriage been conducted that no notice of it reached Paris, and her own party there had kept the secret carefully, for Mr. O'Rourk was too much of an Irishman to publish a story disparaging to "the family;" and Agnes's English maid had been replaced at Dover by a person recommended at the hotel. Mrs. Jones's cross Abigail never condescended to be communicative on any subject. Through the servants, therefore, nothing would transpire of the late event; and for reasons of his own, Sir Harry Ashworth never mentioned the subject, even to his sister.

Of Clelia's early adventure everyone was

equally ignorant, except Louise, who, of course, controlled by her confessor, dared not reveal a circumstance which would be prejudicial to the Convent of St. Augustin, and preventive of Clelia's marriage with Mr. Vivian, now a grand object to the church. In these days, when Paris and London are made next-door neighbours by the electric telegraph; when steam projects newspapers all over the world while still damp from the press; when messages run on wires, and journeys bubble out of boilers, we cannot understand without some consideration how events were forgotten in the places where they occurred before the means of reporting them elsewhere was yet available, for persons in middle life were then more stationary than oysters, and did not use wings of steam to fly with over the earth and through the sea, and even under the ground. After the lapse of a year or two Agnes's story might be told in Paris, but as yet no one had heard

of it there. Madame D'Albremont, totally ignorant of her daughter's adventure, was not likely to hear of that; so now, for the present, there was little chance of painful revelations disturbing the unanimity of the coterie, reciprocally pleased with each other's society.

There was no probability of any secret transpiring from the convent, of which the inmates as well as their dependents were subject to the iron rule of Father Jerome, whose tyranny would not, they believed, terminate with their mortal existence, for he threatened future misery, which it was in his own power to intensify with a diabolic art eloquently particularized in his public denunciations and private communications.

On Clelia's expulsion from the convent after her secret marriage with the supposed Captain Benson, and the real Edward Annesley, the Abbess required that she should in future resume her second name of D'Albremont without St. Clair, which

had been prefixed to it, and by which she was hitherto known, for her father, Monsieur St. Clair, was originally a D'Albremont, and assumed the other name in expectation of a fortune. Clelia also relinquished the sobriquet of Marie, adopted in the convent according to the usages of religious houses, where ordinary appellations are not permissible. These precautionary alterations the nuns thought advisable in order, if possible, to prevent a recognition of their late recreant inmate, and a disclosure of the deception practised on her.

That her secret might be well guarded, her conduct watched, and her anxiety to profess Protestantism defeated, they placed one of their agents, Louise, in the family. A marriage between Vivian and Clelia was possible they soon heard from this person; and it was now most desirable on many accounts, as it might check her Protestant tendencies, for he was a Roman Catholic, and also prevent his alliance with an

English heretic, whose influence on a rich and powerful member of the Church they dreaded, well aware of the yielding and affectionate character which placed Vivian so much in the power of his associates.

The Jesuit director of the Convent of St. Augustin had been more active in his efforts to discover all particulars respecting the secret marriage than Agnes's lawyer; in fact, at the time of its occurrence, he mastered all the details that it was possible to discover, and even learned that Howard, the real or supposed clergyman who officiated, had gone to America, where it was said he died. He also heard that his meeting with Benson was accidental, and that the worthy captain, who was a practical joker, and obliged to leave a regiment in England and exchange into one in India, on account of a malicious hoax, probably engaged this clerical adventurer to officiate more for the fun of marrying Annesley without his

knowledge than from the religious scruples which were attributed to him.

The day before that on which Madame D'Albremont had induced Clelia to accept Vivian, Louise had received a letter, from which she learnt that Howard had died suddenly, and that the marriage certificate, which he had given to Benson, was lost. Coupling these circumstances with the silence and absence of the mysterious bridegroom, Louise resolved on rendering the intelligence she would communicate to Clelia quite decisive, by assuming that her supposed husband was dead. His long silence and neglect justified her in inferring that he would not now claim his bride, and therefore she felt assured that her deception would never be discovered. Jerome, perfectly aware that Annesley, under Benson's name, was the bridegroom in the old chapel, never enlightened Louise to this extent, but kept her in the dark as to many other incidents connected with the

puppets whose actions he directed. Clelia, usually so open, became latterly mistrustful of her maid, and never communicated to her the result of her recent interviews with the stranger in the log-house. At the last of these she heard in a few words that Benson was dead, and startled with the unexpected intelligence, rushed home, doubting the veracity of her informant.

When after her forced consent to marry Vivian she announced her decision to Louise, her astonishment was great on hearing from her maid in return the intelligence of Benson's death, confirmed by assurances that there could now be no doubt of the fact.

Expecting to witness Clelia's joyful demonstrations of delight, and to hear rapturous exclamations of pleasure at her release from a hated engagement, Louise perceived with amazement that she seemed overwhelmed at the intelligence.

“You are not crying, Mademoiselle Clelia!

you cannot regret the death of this man?" Clelia still wept, and did not seem to hear Louise's observations. After a little while she said, sadly, "I cannot think of his death unmoved, Louise; in my position I am sure you would feel as I do. Death is a fearful thing, and doubly startling when it comes suddenly to snatch away one so full of life and hope, and always so distressingly present to my memory. I know that he deceived me, I know that his conduct was base, I feel released from an irksome tie by his death; but now that I recall the bright hours which we spent together, the affection which I know he then felt for me, is it not dreadful to think that all is gone from hence, and that the cold earth shuts out for ever from my sight, as it chills to my mind, all that I once believed to be so admirable?"

Louise could not understand such refinement of feeling, and thought her young lady very inconsistent and ungrateful, and as fantastic as many others of her sex, when,

instead of rejoicing at a release so desirable, she reverted to times and occurrences which it was so much better to forget. Clelia saw how little her natural regret was understood by Louise, she therefore mourned in silence the companion of many happy hours, and made an excuse that evening for remaining alone in her room. Quite irritated at these provoking regrets, Louise, to expend her excited humour, packed up so vigorously that she effected her business in far less than the usual time, seemingly too busy to notice Clelia's continued sorrow.

CHAPTER III.

“ We'll live together like two neighbour vines,
Circling our lives and leaves in one another ;
We'll spring together, and we'll bear one fruit,
One joy shall make us smile, and one grief mourn ;
One day go with us, and one hour of death
Shall close our eyes, and one grave make us happy.”

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

MADAME D'ALBREMONT, after her successful interview with Clelia, reflected intently on the circumstance which had so propitiously hastened the long-expected marriage, trying in vain to solve the mystery that her daughter would not reveal. With her own active temperament, her watchful vigilance, and unerring penetration, it was mortifying to be so baffled. How did Clelia know these strange men, secluded as she had been for three years in a convent, where no notice from the outward world penetrated? Who-

ever they were, to the interest Clelia felt in one of them Madame D'Albremont ascribed her depression and unwillingness to accept Vivian's addresses. This strange man might still appear and prevent the intended marriage, and Madame D'Albremont felt that she might be powerless to defeat or check him. Apprehensions little less harassing than those which had previously beset the daughter now tormented the mother. It seemed as if the time would be interminable which must elapse before the wedding took place, and yet it could not be anticipated, for Vivian had business to transact in France during the next fortnight which he dared not postpone, and Madame D'Albremont vehemently objected to the ceremony being performed in France. The sooner she took Clelia away from Paris the better, and the less that was said of their projects the less likely were they to be defeated.

How she wished to start the next day for England! but urgent impediments rendered

this precaution impossible; and thus delayed, she scarcely hoped to escape without interruption from the dreaded stranger.

Louise would certainly never favour any obstacle to a marriage so conducive to her own interest as Clelia's with the rich Frederick Vivian. So Madame D'Albremont felt assured that she was not privy to the secret rendezvous.

Ever unwilling to take anyone into her confidence, that cautious lady had hitherto, with diplomatic art, endeavoured on several occasions to extract incidentally from the clever attendant what she knew of Clelia's thoughts and feelings. With the pretext of ascertaining particulars respecting her health and the state of her spirits, Madame D'Albremont had supposed, and concluded, and anticipated, so as to extort a remark, or an assent, or a contradiction to the well-calculated assertions, or the hinted suppositions, or the implied negative, cleverly introduced.

There was no love lost between these women; with characters too identical for assimilation, each required an opposite to produce the combination between the positive and the negative mind, compleutive to both, and productive of mutual sympathy.

The mistress, however, was irresistibly compelled to submit to the Jesuit attendant commissioned by Clelia's relations to watch over their niece; while Madame D'Albremont received a pension which they might withhold at pleasure if dissatisfied with her proceedings. The Abbess in the South of France ruled all the family, and, brought up from childhood to obey this lady with respectful awe, Mademoiselle D'Albremont would submit to any command that issued from the Convent of St. Augustin with unquestioning submission.

Madame D'Albremont sometimes feared that a mandate from thence might one day summon Clelia to return to her aunt's protection, or even command her to accept

it permanently as a member of the holy community.

Louise, therefore, must be tolerated by the far-seeing lady as an unrecognised means of communication through the priests with the Abbess, who exacted this guarantee for Madame D'Albremont's conduct. It was not sufficiently orthodox to please the reverend mother, for, unlike recent perverts, Madame D'Albremont did not very accurately observe her religious duties. Still, pecuniary resources depended so entirely upon Clelia's persistence in Roman Catholicism that it was not likely the worldly mother should attempt to prejudice her against it.

Apparently, however, the Abbess would not entirely rely on her sister-in-law's pious professions, or feel assured that Clelia was well guarded against proselytism amongst her English associates. Madame D'Albremont hated the rule of St. Augustin and the *espionnage* of Louise, always trying to defeat

the latter while apparently meekly submitting to the former. It was therefore with great reserve that she spoke to Louise of Vivian's addresses, while she tried to keep the confessor ignorant of her own schemes and projects. On former occasions the reverend gentleman had expressed himself much dissatisfied with his convert's impious reserve. He was a good man, whose amiable simplicity made him an easy dupe to Father Jerome, and although long well acquainted with the crafty Jesuit, he was ignorant of Clelia's adventure, while apprized of her character by his active informant.

Outwardly complying with the practice of the Roman Catholic Church, Mademoiselle D'Albremont, with her Protestant objection to confession, only communicated what she thought it necessary for the good priest to know. He always soothed and comforted her with kind, fatherly advice, such as a judicious parent might speak to a beloved child. Free from domestic ties, engrossed

solely by his wishes and efforts to console and guide his flock, the kind pastor showed how the duties of his holy office might be practised with a conscientious efficacy which the prolific fathers of the Protestant Church can scarcely find leisure to imitate. He exemplified, too, the value of some institutions of his faith, when rescued by the ministry of a worthy member from the deception and fraudulence which they so often subserve.

In the actual dilemma Madame D'Albremont, unwilling to ask his counsel, now reluctantly consulted Louise—as usual directly about Clelia's health, and indirectly with reference to the secret impediments which had so long retarded her acceptance of Vivian. After some verbal fencing, at which each colloquist was equally expert, Louise, who looked for these inquiries on hearing from Clelia of her sudden decision, and was prepared to meet them, assured Madame D'Albremont that religious scruples had

alone prompted Mademoiselle's refusal of Vivian.

“Was this possible? Was religion the cause of her hesitation?—only religion?” thought Madame D’Albremont, for she uttered not a word, although a weight seemed removed from her heart that made it bound at the intelligence. “What a silly child she must be,” again thought Madame D’Albremont, “not to marry him and settle her religion afterwards!”

That Clelia should care whether she wedded a Protestant or a Catholic appeared an absurdity to her mother; but the fear that her opinions might displease Vivian did not seem equally ridiculous. Louise now informed Madame D’Albremont how the Abbess’s discovery of Mademoiselle Clelia’s intended apostasy had been followed by her expulsion from the convent, while it was pretended that delicate health occasioned her removal to Italy.

“The real motive for this change has been

kept secret, and never alluded to till now," said Louise, "when my confessor permits me to communicate it to Madame as an explanation of Mademoiselle's unaccountable refusal of Mr. Vivian's proposal."

"Why did you not tell me this before?" asked Madame D'Albremont. "You knew that from the convent I could learn nothing."

"Because Madame never explicitly required me to do so," was Louise's answer, which she had reserved for the time when Clelia's real objections to the marriage might be overcome. She could not now understand why they were so suddenly relinquished.

Louise bound Madame D'Albremont to secrecy. Clelia was not to hear of this revelation, and her mother felt so persuaded of the Abbess's extreme bigotry, and Clelia's piety, that she quite credited Louise's fabrication, and even began to think that the secret visitor at the log-house might have

been some Jesuit delegate adviser, whose interference Clelia was sworn to conceal.

Very much satisfied with the particulars which she gathered from Louise, Madame D'Albremont, proud of her diplomacy, next began to consider if she should explain to Vivian the alleged cause of Clelia's early rejection of his suit, in order to excuse a delay which he might attribute to a less satisfactory cause. After some deliberation, she said to herself: "Why should I interfere now when our grand object is attained? If Vivian be satisfied with what Clelia communicates, and asks no questions, why should I volunteer this information? People are often so bigoted that prejudice blinds and bewilders them, and perhaps it might render him averse, after all, to marry even an incipient Protestant. When the ceremony is over Clelia can turn to Methodism or Judaism for what I care, or she may go about like some other mad preaching fanatics. But, after all, who was her

visitor? who could the man be but a Jesuit? If Vivian ever hear of his appearance that night, I shall declare him to be a Jesuit emissary, who came to England on some secret mission from the Abbey of St. Augustin. My future son-in-law will then be silenced and satisfied, as he believes in the infallibility of the order. After all, there may be some truth in this assertion, for Clelia is very mysterious when I question her about her convent, and on her return to Paris told me that it was her own wish and her aunt's command that we should never allude to her residence at St. Augustin. This Protestant whim partly accounts for their concealments, as the Abbess could never acknowledge an apostate niece."

Vivian was not quite so unobservant of Clelia's sudden decision as Madame D'Albremont supposed. After his first delighted surprise, and a short interview with Clelia, when protestations of eternal gratitude and assurances of his boundless happiness

entirely engrossed them, he began to wonder at the change in her decision, and tortured by doubt and jealousy, he resolved at once to ask Clelia for an explanation of that mystery which she had twice declared must ever separate them through life.

He had been suddenly called to Paris the morning after a hurried interview with her, and did not return to Clairville till the next evening. As he rode along the plain beneath the château he saw its windows radiant with reflections of the setting sun opposite; it beamed like the palace of light upon the dark grey rocks beneath. Light seemed to gleam from every casement, illuminating the ancient building as if to welcome the bridegroom, who came to enact the same scene, and to express the same feelings, that its time-stained walls had so often before witnessed. Such ancient edifices are monuments that enshrine for the imaginative the thoughts and actions of past lives, of

which the tomb but encloses the material spoils of death.

Vivian found Clelia in the drawing-room seated upon a low stool, and surrounded by flowers, some of which she was tying into a wreath of varied colours. Vivian placed a chair beside her, and asked if she would permit him to remain with her till Madame D'Albremont's return, for the servant said that, with her two companions, she had gone out walking some time before.

The permission was readily given, while she assured him that her mother would come back immediately, and certainly not object to their very short *tête-à-tête*. Clelia held up the wreath for him to look at. "Are they not sweet, Frederick? They are my favourite flowers, and I always call them my own roses."

"I shall remember your taste, sweet Clelia," answered Vivian, "and order them to be plentifully planted in the conservatory

at Paris; and you shall have a bower of them in the greenhouses of Cornwall."

She placed one in his coat, and then they sat for some moments silent, each too full of thought to speak of common things. How eloquent are such pauses, when the feelings that find no vent in speech seem otherwise exhaled from our being and commingle in an atmosphere around us, which we breathe with ecstasy, and through which we see every object embellished, we hear every sound sweetened, and find every perfume intensified, till rapture overcomes and intoxicates us. Clelia seemed then a vision of beauty to Frederick as he bent over her, while she looked down on the flowers around her that were diffusing abundantly their voluptuous scents. He took her hand, and held it between his.

"Clelia, my beloved!" he said, with a tremulous voice, "how can I ever sufficiently thank you for at last taking pity on my misery? How can I ever feel sufficiently

grateful for a decision which makes me so happy that I feel bewildered, overcome by the change that one sentence of yours has effected in my whole existence? But, Clelia, dear, you will not think me unreasonable, you will not suppose that I am jealous, when I ask you, now that we are alone, to explain the long hesitation, the deferred consent, which I feel assured did not proceed from want of affection. Perhaps it is wrong to exact this explanation after being told that you could never grant it; but Clelia, then we were only friends, and friends not long met—now, darling Clelia, I am your betrothed, I am your future husband, the depository of your hopes, your fears, and your wishes, one from whom you should have no secrets, as I never shall have any from you."

The wreath which Clelia had been binding for the chapel of her old friend the curé, in Paris, dropped from her lap, when, after a sudden start, she remained as if

transfixed at this sudden request, which evidently was unexpected. She said, falteringly, "Frederick, I told you that I never could divulge my secret, and you promised then never to urge me again to do so."

He pressed her hand tenderly, and whispered—"Not to Frederick Vivian would you have revealed it, dearest, but to me, your loving husband—to your own husband, Clelia, you will tell all your little secrets; he will love you the more for your innocent over-estimate of trifling errors or unlooked-for mischances; from me you will have no secret. And then, sweetest, you will not make me miserable now with the dread that you even thought of another, that you ever felt for another as you do for me." He said this with an agitated voice and a reproachful tone.

By degrees the light was fading in the room; a mist seemed to surround Clelia while she sat immovable after this entreaty,

her head bent towards the ground, and her eyes fixed there, while Vivian waited patiently till she raised them towards him, and said, faintly—

“Frederick, you promised never to question me again, and now that you do so I might feel hurt at the want of confidence which your curiosity implies; but nothing that you do can ever offend me”—and she kissed the hand which held hers—“nothing that I may say will satisfy you, love; so be patient, be patient still; before many months are over I can tell you all that you wish to know, for then I shall be absolved from my oath.”

“An oath, Clelia!” cried Vivian; “to whom did you swear it?”

“I swore it in a chapel, Frederick, and from thence must I be absolved from it.”

“Pardon me, pity me, Clelia, my beloved!” said Vivian, stooping to kiss her forehead, which seemed to him in the gloomy room radiant with heavenly light;

“forgive me, love, these suspicions, of which I am now ashamed.”

They sat again silent for some moments, till the servant brought in lights, and Madame D’Albremont returned from her walk.

After mutual greetings, Clelia and Vivian went out on the moonlit terrace, and stood there looking on the wide plain below. It seemed that the spell which kept them silent and thoughtful was broken by the vicinity of others; and now they talked together, with whispering voices, of the long future through which their path would be so smooth and bright.

Vivian, while under the fascination of Clelia’s presence, forgot his determination to discover why her resolution, so often repeated and so urgently opposed, at the last had given way unexpectedly. The child-like confidence resulting from a benevolent disbelief in evil had been temporarily shaken by this new assault of jealousy,

which however, had readily evaporated during their interview. Still, as he walked slowly home, unpleasant thoughts arose suggestive of doubts and perplexities.

He descended on foot from the castle to the plateau beneath, by a winding path, and then leisurely and musingly pursued his way home between an avenue of Lombardy poplars that led to his dwelling. The moon cast their long shadows across the road, on which it shone through the intervals separating the black lines that seemed so dark over the light white ground. As he looked down upon it he heard footsteps approaching, and saw Castelle coming onwards to meet him. The chemist, quite aware of his friend's unexpected happiness, felt now much surprised at the grave and thoughtful manner with which Vivian received his greeting.

"You look as serious, Frederick," he said, "as if still the victim of doubt and

suspense, instead of being the accepted lover of your adorable Clelia."

"My good friend," answered Vivian, "you will philosophize, I know, on my misgiving, and declare that it results from the chemical proportion of evil which must ever sooner or later neutralize all human good. I am constantly endeavouring to guess why Clelia has so suddenly overcome her objections to marry me, and I torture myself to discover the reason for this change, attributing it to causes which make me decidedly uneasy."

"Of course you do, my good friend," said Castelle; "of course you are too fortunate to be entirely happy. We must discover some attenuating circumstance to reduce bliss to the proper regulation standard, some evil to neutralize it, some solvent to dilute it."

"But," interrupted Vivian, "I cannot understand why she should now all at once disregard the impediments previously supposed to be insurmountable."

“Vivian,” said Castelle, “like many other intelligent and well-informed men, you are totally unaware how the physical influences of the body affect the mind; how, in our corporeal condition, we may detect the causes of conduct apparently inexplicable to those who do not realize the reciprocal action of mind and matter. In the natural course of life this process operates like the other mechanism of nature, with a regularity allaying attention; but when either of the concurrent influences preponderates, when the mind deviates from the expected rational course, and dictates conduct inconsistent or irrational, then we often look for the motive of such perversion in every direction save that from which it actually proceeds. But the physiologist, better versed in the processes of nature, discovers the solution of what is to us inexplicable in peculiarity of temperament, deranged health, or in diseases of which he can often detect the existence

by their effects on manner, temper, or conduct."

"My good Castelle," said Vivian, "with this theory, which you often propound, and which I do not much like to hear, all moral responsibility is rejected, and human creatures are supposed to be puppets, of whom the strings are pulled by circumstances internal or external."

"Wherever the evil influence comes from," said Castelle, "we have the power sometimes to resist it; and the merit of doing so is not lessened because our impulses are regulated by laws that the Creator has established to promote what is good, and to restrain what is evil, in our chequered world. Clelia's state renders her particularly sensitive to all such impressions, physical and mental; the latter, if unpleasant, she is likely to aggravate by an exaggeration of the evil that excites them, whether she accuse herself of errors of which she has only thought, or

believe herself capable of crimes of which she has only heard. The very purity of her own mind, the very tenderness of her own conscience, will render her remorse for imaginary sins only more harassing. It may be one of these of which she now accuses herself."

"The delusions you describe," said Vivian, "are those of madness; and Clelia's mind is as sane as it is pure."

"Pardon me," interrupted Castelle, "there again you make one of the mistakes common amongst the best-informed persons, still ignorant of our physical nature. Clelia is not insane—far from it; but she is hysterical, and suffers from a state of mind which is much commoner than you imagine, one which would account for a great deal of the caprice and inconsistency of which we so often justly accuse the other sex, besides other eccentric errors which our sex sometimes perpetrates in early adolescence. Incendiарism is our mania of that period. Do

not trouble yourself about Clelia's delusion, that she has been guilty of some unpardonable error, or is capable of perpetrating some new enormity; do not oppose or contradict her; and when her position in life is assured, when she is released by her marriage with you from all fear of the future, or regret for the past, you will see that her whims will subside, and that she, with her unselfish nature, may in future be too much engrossed with your happiness to have time for indulging her own vagaries."

The friends prolonged their walk, talking the while on the same subject; and when they returned to their home, Vivian, calmed by Castelle's reasoning, resumed the cheerfulness which was a natural consequence of his new position, and retired to rest fully convinced that he ought to be the happiest man in existence, and that Clelia was the embodiment of a spirit too pure and ethereal for his coarse nature to comprehend, and that like the sun, its

effulgence would only blind the rash investigator who gazed upon it too intently.

At last the two ladies, accompanied by Ashworth, took leave of Agnes and her three companions. Vivian was to follow as soon as some arrangements connected with the approaching ceremony were completed, he would then remain with his affianced till their wedding-day.

Agnes bade adieu to Clelia with tearful eyes, for they were not to meet for months to come, while her friends spent the autumn in England, Miss Somerton would remain in Paris. On many accounts she wished to avoid a return to London, and now her aunt's imprudent marriage rendered a prolonged stay in France expedient, where she hoped to make the old woman comfortable, and legally to secure her from the pecuniary exactions of the prodigal adventurer.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Ah ! 'twas not thus—with tearful eyes
And beating heart,—she used to gaze,
On the magnificent earth and skies,
In her own land in happier days.”—MOORE.

THE party at Clairville spent a dull evening after the departure of the travellers, missing Sir Harry's fanciful sallies and Clelia's gentle presence. Little did they imagine how a spectator from without gazed at their proceedings, and anxiously watched Clelia's vacant place, thinking of her even oftener than they did, for Leonora's nightly watch continued, and she walked round the château with stealthy steps, peeping in at the open windows, and looking everywhere for Castelle. He now was called by business to Paris, and as Vivian sat beside Agnes when Leonora observed them, the

poor jealous woman fancied that he was another admirer of the fair Clelia; but from her estimate of Castelle's irresistible merits, she concluded that the pale Englishman worshipped in vain. Thinking that Castelle had absented himself with the younger lady, she watched as much as ever, in drizzling rain, and in the chill currents of the damp evening air, ever looking for their presence with eagerness, and ever rejoiced at not perceiving them together.

One night, her return home was retarded by some incident which kept the party up later than usual at Clairville, and she saw with dismay the night darken so deeply that it seemed impossible for her to find the path homewards through the woods. After losing her way and retracing it again, after stumbling over stones and hurting herself against trees, she perceived a light from the cottage beneath the place where she stood, which was not her usual path, but in a certain direction by which

she knew that it could be reached. A few steps downward and she fell over an uprooted tree, and on trying to rise, felt her ankle so much hurt, and her hand so useless, that it was quite impossible to move a step further. After a little rest, which she hoped would lessen the agony that both occasioned her, she sat quietly upon the stump of the fallen tree, till, shivering with cold and pain, she began to have great apprehension that the night might be passed in her present miserable condition. Still the pains increased, and still she looked anxiously down at the light which gleamed from the cottage through the trees that stood on the hill where she rested.

But now she hears a footstep, and it approaches; some one is walking up the usual path, perhaps to seek her; it may be Ernest, sent out by Manon, with a vague hope that he may have intelligence sufficient to understand a request that he should seek Leonora. Her cry brings the

young man to the spot, and he seems immediately to perceive the necessity for her return home, for, with a powerful arm, he lifts her from the place and bears her to the footway, from whence, after a pause, he carries her down to the cottage. The poor old man met them at the door, equipped to go in search of his daughter, for though Manon had kept him ignorant of her prolonged absence by many excuses, it was impossible longer to prevent the pursuit he was just commencing, in which the old woman determined to accompany him. His distress at seeing Leonora's condition pained her even more than wounds or sprains, and repressed her moans, while she tried to look at ease, assuring him that the accident was a slight one, and that with a day or two of rest she would speedily recover.

That night she could not as usual see her old father settled in his bed; she could not as usual put on his slippers, smooth his pillow, and give him the little refreshment

which he always took from her hands before composing himself to sleep. He was always a late riser and retired to bed at twelve, so that Leonora's wanderings had terminated just when he required her services, except twice, and then Manon pretexted headache as an excuse for her absence.

The usual remedies for sprains and bruises were applied—the old servant was well versed in such ailments. Leonora had retired to rest in her little room, where the old man, as soon as she was in bed, kissed her and wished her good night in tones of tenderness that a loving father's voice so well expresses. It soothed her for the time, but what a miserable night followed! Pain and distress of mind, at her probable incapacity for work, almost superseded the jealousy of the previous day's suffering, inducing a reaction which released her from the engrossing preoccupation that latterly superseded all prudent forethought. Now, she remembered how their little stock of

money was nearly exhausted for want of the usual supply earned by her former untiring industry. During two weeks she had not touched a pencil, and the painting ordered by her employer still stood unfinished on the easel, although it was to have been completed and paid for ten days before.

Now all work was impossible; her right hand felt helpless, and likely to continue so for weeks. She could not stand, and was thus disabled from making the personal excuse that might pacify a very exacting man of business. To Castelle she would not now apply for help, and Ernest's best friend, Charles Breton, who served him in better days, had lately gone on business to Italy, she knew not where. To whom could she turn? How was she to support her decrepit father and the helpless Ernest? for she knew none of her cousin's former friends, and was too proud to beg from mere acquaintances. Manon, although willing,

was too old to work; besides, she must now be the entire dependence of Villabella, for the old man required much assistance. Wearily did poor Leonora recapitulate all these difficulties while she watched the breaking day, which with its sunlight brought no solace to her restless mind and tortured body.

Her father soon stood beside her bed, for he had not slept from thinking of his poor helpless child, and knowing that the sorrows of her heart would bear heavily now upon her spirit, which with active energy, by bodily movement and changing pursuits, had hitherto relieved them. However well aware that Castelle ruled her destiny, still, with the passivity of age and the confidence of affection, he never alluded to what was likely to pain her, when he perceived how lately the great chemist had estranged himself from their little dwelling, and how engrossed he was by other friends. Too delicate to hint at circumstances so

wounding to his dear child, or too reliant to urge any new line of conduct, he waited in silence a happy solution to all doubts and perplexities.

Days passed on, week succeeded week, and Leonora could not yet use her disabled hand, or stand up on the strained foot. Their little exchequer was further exhausted, and she wrote to her hard employer in Paris, asking for the advance of a small sum, which she promised to repay with drawings as soon as it was possible to resume a pencil. This little favour he refused, and harshly too, for the man's advances to Leonora had once been indignantly repulsed, and he afterwards availed himself of her talent for his own benefit, irrespective of her advantage.

Leonora at the end of the month could move about and sit with her father, to whom she read daily. In order that his diet might not be reduced, Manon was sent to Fontainebleau, to dispose of the few little

articles of jewellery which she possessed, and with the proceeds to supply the delicacies that he liked ; still he grew thinner, but without complaining, and even appearing unconscious of the change in their circumstances, or the poverty of their diet ; but a close observer might interpret the meaning of his anxious, searching look as Leonora made the best of what she could offer him, and tried to conceal the coarser food that was reserved for Ernest and herself. Then Villabella pretended not to have any appetite ; vainly did Leonora urge him to eat—for days he declined the little dish made for himself alone ; and ere long this privation told upon his feeble frame.

Leonora one morning at her early visit found him insensible, and no effort of hers could revive him ; frantically she called to Manon, beseechingly she entreated her to hasten to the next village for a practitioner who resided there. Then, supporting her father, and chafing his temples, she

waited in breathless anxiety for the arrival of this doctor. A heavy step ascended the stairs, the door opened slowly, and Ernest entering, and kneeling beside the bed, took his uncle's hand in his, with an air of intelligence that Leonora had not for months perceived upon his countenance. There they both sat, equally helpless, and unable to revive the old man; Leonora looking at the object of her anxiety, and listening as time passed to every sound without which broke the silence of the little glen, hoping that each announced the arrival of the anxiously wished-for doctor. Ernest stood quietly beside the bed, with pitying eyes fixed upon his unconscious uncle.

The physician arrived at last, and soon assured Leonora that Mr. Villabella's insensibility was only temporary, and that, with care and good nourishment, she need apprehend no dangerous result from it. His words were verified when towards evening her patient recovered conscious-

ness, although his talk was incoherent, and his mind quite unsettled. He did not even recognise her, but at midnight fell into a sound sleep, while she still watched by his side.

Early next day she despatched Manon with her best clothing to Fontainebleau, in order to realize whatever it would sell for, to provide the doctor's fee and medicine, as already the proceeds of the ornaments which she had previously sacrificed were expended. The dresses produced but little, and still the poor invalid required nourishment. His delusions became more distressing to Leonora, who felt convinced that her beloved father would now die mad. Die mad! what words to pronounce! what an apprehension for a doting child to harbour! The dread of such a fearful calamity nearly affected her own intellect. At mid-day Villabella awoke, and starting up in bed, called out the name of his wife, whose death had been the commencement of all

their misfortunes. “Adela! Adela!” he shrieked, “where are you? where are you? Come to me, I am dying.” That was a name which he had never pronounced to Leonora since their bereavement; each sorrowed in silence, dreading to aggravate the other’s grief by any allusion to the past.

Leonora’s courage now failed, for the poor old man seemed to sink daily, and still refused what simple food she could supply. At times he would weep and say, “I don’t like this stuff, it is not jelly, it is not what you used to make for me, Leonora; where is my soup? where is my wine?” Vainly did she try to make him believe that the bread-and-water panada was what he liked.

“You are not Leonora,” he would then cry; “bring her here to me; she is a good child, and wont starve me.”

The nights grew chilly, and Leonora watched, clothed with scanty garments, in the little ill-closed room, and the idiot sat

looking on, with his large eyes fixed on his cousin, whose every movement he watched as she flitted about the sick-room. Day and night beside her father, she saw his poor hands grow thinner, his face paler, and she heard his voice weaker, and she knew how her insane pursuit of Castelle had caused all this. In the stillness of the night when her patient slept, she would kneel at the foot of his bed, behind the curtains, and, bowed to the ground, rest her head there in token of the repentance with which she deplored her error, and of a promise if he were spared, to devote her future life to him who lay there in that restless sleep, calling on his Adela, who had never failed him, and whose place and whose love were bequeathed to her as a sacred trust, when she promised to become the loving guardian of his declining life.

She could not ask his forgiveness now, she could not clasp him to her heart as of old, and confide to him the errors which she dared scarcely confess to herself. He called for

one who never betrayed him, and summoned by his appeal, her spirit might now be hovering near them, to release his from its failing tenement, and to speed it upwards to regions where they would be for ever reunited.

His poor thin hands, listlessly laid on the coverlet, tortured Leonora by their emaciation; his dim, sunken eyes seemed to upbraid her; his piteous clamour for better nourishment pierced through and through her heart and maddened her brain, till, in a state of distraction, and with the restlessness of despair, which, even motiveless, still seeks a change, she tottered downstairs and reached a chair in the room below. There stood her easel; she turned away from it, for there too rested the unfinished task, the accusing proof of her selfish engrossment. But now she summons courage to look at it. What does she behold? Whose work is that? Where did that splendid masterly sketch come from? She caught it up, gazed closer at it, and in the corner saw the signature of

Ernest D'Arval—of her cousin! At this moment he entered the room, and smilingly nodded his usual affirmation when she asked him if he had executed the painting in her hands.

No time should be lost; a letter was at once despatched to the dealer in Paris, with an offer of the sketch ordered, not finished now by Leonora, but by the great artist whose pictures had become treasures since his pencil was lost to the world of art.

There remained just enough of money in the house to pay for Manon's journey to Paris; it would be quickly replaced by the price of Ernest's painting, and the old woman was soon despatched with the precious sketch to the metropolis, where her absence seemed to last a century, till at last she returned with a sum far exceeding Leonora's highest expectations. With it she brought nourishing food, carefully ordered by Leonora for her father, who ate like a greedy child the good things offered to him. The picture-dealer had sent

a note to Leonora, offering to purchase at her own price any drawings that Ernest would supply.

Nutritious diet soon restored Villabella to his usual health, and the kind friend, Charles Breton, whose absence had proved such a misfortune to the poor family in their difficulties, had just returned to Paris, whither he easily persuaded Leonora to come, as soon as she was aware that Clairville no longer held any attraction to detain her in the neighbourhood. With her two loved charges she departed for the metropolis, where she soon established them in a comfortable lodging.

CHAPTER V.

“She that asks
Her dear five hundred friends, contemns them all
And hates their coming. They—what can they less?—
Make just reprisals, and with cringe and shrug
And bow obsequious, hide their hate of her.”—COWPER.

MADAME D’ALBREMONT and her daughter performed their journey to London happily, and with the steady pace of by-gone slow times, when rich travellers, by pleasant easy posting, reached it in four days and a half, instead of being fired off by the long range of the Dover company, and shot into London with a velocity which blinds your eyes, deafens your ears, addles your brains, and unsettles your digestion.

Not but that there was noise enough in the progress of our travellers to torture the most obtuse senses, for the three French horses and

the postillion made as much as it was possible for them to produce. Everything clattered, the postillion's limbs and the horses' seeming to be fastened on with loose strings, merely to prevent them from flying off anywhere in the wrong direction. Then the animals shrieked with unsuspected vocal powers, having, of course, been trained to do so, and the postillion vociferated, and the dogs barked, and the villagers shouted at the postillion, who, with nods and winks, and a flower in his hat and another in his mouth, nodded to the people, winked at his female admirers, and seemed to think as much of himself as Phaeton, while the hired vehicle, also tied together with loose strings, shook, and bounded, and rattled over the rough pavement. A centrifugal force seemed to send the whole equipage and its living appendages away from the centre of gravity where they ought to remain. It resembled some of your volatile friends, who seem to have no fulcrum like other orderly, neat

persons, exemplifications of the attraction of cohesion, that keeps everything close and tight about them !

The three travellers arrived in London, to their surprise, on a bright evening, the fog being, no doubt, engaged with business in the City, and settled themselves at a retired hotel, where Sir Harry had sent to prepare apartments.

The world had tired of its recent gaieties; the Square gardens looked brown, the trees dejected, the mignonette in the balconies was getting seedy, as were many other things of more pretension, for every one was fading in the baleful atmosphere of July fashion. Mammas, who had vainly come up in May from some watering-places, where they passed the winter, accompanied by charming Charlottes and ethereal Louisas, for the new nomenclature of daughters was not yet introduced, grew desperate. Meanwhile, the poor, stationary, involuntary absentees left behind, still looking out from

the coast for that Leander who never came, and harping upon the good fortune of their lucky friends who, cousins to some Irish peer, had enjoyed the season and the grandest society in a lodging of Upper Blandford Street, wondered why Charlotte and Louisa Fitzjones did not marry.

Lady Mary and her daughters, informed through the agency of that electric telegraph, gossip, a very remote ancestor of the recent metallic messenger, of Madame D'Albremont's arrival, hastened to learn if Clelia had accepted Vivian, or if there was any chance of rescuing him for Mirabel. She, poor woman, looked fagged and thin—for had she not sat in draughts powerful enough to turn a mill? had she not stood upright like a young sentry on her old legs for hours together, at the doors of ball-rooms? had she not bravely baffled the drowsiness consequent on months of continuous vigils? had she not with persevering activity chased, and crumbled, and chewed that bit of gum mastic in

her mouth, which she always held there at parties to prevent herself from napping? did she not try to say her prayers to keep awake if very sleepy? and had she not repeated the Evening Hymn to her youngest daughter when they were left alone on a conspicuous bench at Almacks, that the company might not attribute their silence to the dejection of disappointment? did she not transform the faded dresses of her girls into poor garments for herself? had she not dined on tea while they were enjoying grand regales at the houses of rich friends? in fine, did she not live for them alone, for their present pleasure and for their future happiness? And do not hundreds of mothers undergo equal hardships with the same unselfishness, and does not the world ridicule, and even censure these noble sacrifices of maternal devotion, misdirected, it is true, but still requiring far greater self-abnegation than the more rational cares of motherly home duties?

· A reverse to this picture must occur to the mind's eye of those who have seen the parent deserted while her daughters revel in the luxuries and pleasures of the married prosperity secured by her past cheerful self-denial; or forgotten by the son whose career was expedited to fortune at the same cost. Does she not sometimes sicken, and linger, and die, alas! alone and neglected, and at last forgotten?

Madame D'Albremont received the Mantonfords' visit graciously, but did not regret its brevity; she knew full well that they could be of no use to her, for social adventuresses were only troublesome competitors of others similarly situated.

Sir Harry secured a box at the Opera for his sister, which an old friend placed at his disposal. They heard Madame Pasta in "Othello," and witnessed that exquisite performance, which has never since been equalled. Clelia sat entranced; her mother wondered at the money-value of music; and

Sir Harry applauded, with the conventional enthusiasm of fashion.

While in London Madame D'Albremont determined on presenting Clelia at Court; Sir Harry had urged her to do so, and the poor girl consented to undergo the fatigues of a drawing-room to please her relations. There was no queen in 1823 to hold courts, which were then few and far between, and less numerously attended than now, when we throng around the throne to do homage, not alone to royalty, but to virtue, and intellect, and refinement, in a combination new to the world, and bow in reverence before one who was never known to fail or to err.

Clelia looked very beautiful in white garments, ornamented with blush-roses and pearls—symbols of her own pure nature. She was universally admired, making her curtsy with so much grace and deference that Madame D'Albremont felt greatly elated at her daughter's success. The

crowd little resembled those of our own time, when everyone goes to Court except the babies and recognised idiots; nor was it necessary to put pens, guarded by shepherds in uniform, around the encroaching combative ladies; although there appeared a good sprinkling of fidgety, pushing dawagers in turbans like that of the Saracen's Head. Age had its peculiar dress formerly, and did not wear chaplets of roses, or robes looped up with garlands of spring flowers.

Drawing-rooms and levées being of rare occurrence in the reign of the graceful George, the *manége* of the scene could not generally be well understood. It was more elaborate, too, than in our days, and ladies required fuller instructions than they purchase now from the professors of airs and graces, and purveyors of new dances.

Still, then, as now, the usual number of mistakes occurred amongst the uninitiated: there were false starts, gibbings, and boltings, to use the equestrian slang of fashion;

there was the same kind of man as his successor, in our day, who seizes the royal hand, and gives it a hearty shake, when it is held out for him to kiss. There was the other gentleman, too, who, when near the King always bolted off to the opposite side, and rushed amongst the startled attendants, who pushed him back indignantly, when he plunged into the thick of another group, from whence he was equally repulsed, till all usual proceedings being arrested by his vagaries, a nobleman-in-waiting seized him by the arm, and brought him up, scared and red, and hot, to His Majesty, to make the best bow he could under the circumstances, and then to be escorted out of the room by an officer of court police in his gold vestment. He was next followed by the middle-aged man, who, being unused to martial instruments, was sure to fall over his sword, and had to be picked up from the feet of majesty, and led out of the presence. That young lady with the muslin train is always there, and we are not sure that the present repre-

sentative is not a lineal descendant of that person who drew back with native modesty when William IV. tried to kiss her cheek, as is usual at presentations, and to whom the jocular monarch said, “Hang it, ma’am, I’m not going to bite you!”

The D’Albremonts, unimplicated in any such dilemma, returned home, not only unscathed, but well satisfied with the day’s exploit. Madame D’Albremont congratulated herself on the success of the toilets, in which fashion and economy combined in the just proportion that feminine skill like hers can best calculate.

She had availed herself of the “tremendous sacrifices” of trade, bought seductive shawls labelled “chaste,” some at prices proportioned to the reduced value of the other cardinal virtues which they represented. She had benefited by the healthy season to purchase cheap black silks, and hearing probably of an expected rise in cotton, provided herself accordingly.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Up springs the dance along the lighted dome,
Mix’d and involved, a thousand sprightly ways,
The glittering court effuses every pomp ;
The circle deepens : beam’d from gaudy robes,
Tapers and sparkling gems, and radiant eyes,
A soft effulgence o’er the palace waves.”—THOMSON.

THE last Almacks was to crown the season next week, and Sir Harry succeeded in procuring tickets for his sister and niece; so many families had left town that a good-natured patroness, with some returned vouchers on her hands, bestowed three upon the suppliant baronet.

London had then a circumscribed circle of fashion, which did not send radii into the swamps of Pimlico, or the remote district of Paddington. She shut herself into a small focus, repelling every eccentric

movement that might encroach upon her centre from any less sacred area.

Amongst the dandies of the day, the beaux who were the conservators of good manners, the wits whom fashionable dulness could not repress, did Sir Harry introduce his lovely niece. There was assembled a greater mixture at Almacks than in the early season, when the patronesses had the pick of society. Girls who gave good fortunes to some pauper peer's younger son, for the sake of securing Almacks tickets, were there; rich Indians, whose golden shawls paid for notice, elderly men with vacillating feelings, undecided whether to leave their properties to a prospective widow or to an actual godchild, were there; young squires from the country, with broad acres and narrow intellects, were there, paying humble addresses to the penniless cousins of titled patronesses.

Still, Clelia's loveliness diverted many a negotiator from business, and the unoccu-

pied stared and wondered from whence came the sylph-like beauty who had never been seen before. She danced but little, and enjoyed the ball less, having only attended it to oblige her mother ; and suffering from its fatigue so severely the next day, that she repented sincerely this infringement of the hygienic rules enjoined by

* Castelle.

Madame D'Albremont went to some parties alone, and at one of them met a certain Mrs. De Smith, with whom she had been acquainted at Spa two years before. Each lady was charmed to see the other, and expressed her delight with the superlatives of French politeness usual at the time. Madame D'Albremont was then informed that Mrs. De Smith, who knew Sir John Drainland abroad, was invited to Drainland Abbey, where they were to meet the following week.

Mrs. De Smith was a French edition of the British female—very sharp, very well

dressed, and exceedingly fond of amusement. Fortunately for her, no connubial pledges of little De Smiths had interrupted the course of her smooth life; no pin-money was diverted from her own toilet to purchase bassinets and baby finery, mechanical toys, or deceptive bon-bons; nor had she any outlay to make in that expanse of pink silk, and rose-coloured calico, and white muslin, and fine lace, which cover the seclusion of other ladies upon annual arrivals in the establishment.

Madame D'Albremont dwindled into nobody in the London world, where she formed the most incorrect notions of social distinctions; but it was with unsuccessful artifice that she informed her friends how much she despised fine society, although invitations to great houses succeeded each other in painful abundance. Tired and annoyed by her fruitless season, she determined that Drainland Abbey should renovate her health, her purse, and her spirits; and

there she was to proceed, although with very little hope of enjoying much pleasure in the wholesome dulness of country medicated life.

Clelia, her mother, and Sir Harry therefore started for their rural visit in a small post-chaise, encumbered with bandboxes containing wedding finery.

Lady Drainland received the arrival with cold courtesy, for no great affection existed between the sisters, as Madame D'Albremont's long residence abroad separated her from English relations; and even had they met oftener, Lady Drainland's views and habits were too opposite to those of her Frenchified sister to render a close intercourse agreeable to either.

Madame D'Albremont, however, soon settled herself comfortably at her brother-in-law's fine house, and prepared to remain there as long as she was tolerated. She anxiously expected Frederick, who was now daily looked for at Drainland, where all

preparations were completing for the wedding, which was to take place immediately after his arrival.

Mademoiselle D'Albremont wrote to him almost daily letters, which were forwarded by her mother; such was the requirement of propriety at that period. With much regret they heard that his arrival would be delayed some days longer, intelligence which made Clelia very uncomfortable, for she dreaded every impediment, however trifling, that threatened any postponement of the ceremony.

Madame D'Albremont was as nervously anxious for it to take place, but now the prospect of showing off her brother's fine place to Mrs. De Smith engrossed her thoughts, well knowing how that communicative lady would expatiate amongst her Paris friends on the grandeur of Madame D'Albremont's antecedents.

CHAPTER VII.

“ But if the rougher sex by this fierce sport
Is hurried wild, let not such horrid joy
E'er stain the bosom of the British fair.
Far be the spirit of the chase from them.
Uncomely courage, unbeseeming skill,
To spring the fence, to rein the prancing steed ;
The cap, the whip, the masculine attire,
In which they roughen to the sense, and all
The winning softness of the sex is lost.”

THOMSON.

MRS. DE SMITH received her invitation to Drainland Abbey with great delight, for during a long residence in France she had heard such encomiums of *la vie de château* in England that it appeared to her the *summum bonum* of earthly felicity. Although, like a wise woman, she did not openly express her determination to Mr. De Smith, it was fixed on persuading that obedient master to purchase a country-seat

instead of the house in London, for which he was already in treaty.

The morning of departure for Drainland Abbey Mrs. De Smith, who, decked in a very fashionable travelling-dress, was in a brilliant humour, congratulated Mr. De Smith on the approaching opportunity of seeing country life to perfection.

“ You will now learn, my dear,” said she, “ how delightful it is!”

“ Not I,” replied Mr. De Smith; “ I have no pastoral tastes, nor any desire for voluntary banishment in some remote corner of existence.”

“ Banishment!” cried Mrs. De Smith; “ nowhere can one be more sociable or see one’s friends so frequently.”

“ I daresay I should see a great deal too much of them,” growled Mr. De Smith. “ I remember how my namesake Sydney said, ‘ You *entertain* people in London, but *maintain* them in the country.’ ”

Breakfast over, our travellers proceeded

to the coach-office, where they heard very bewildering directions as to the route they should select. Some people advised one road, others a contrary one; till at last, perplexed and quite uncertain about everything, they started. At that time the mysterious Sphinx Bradshaw had not yet perplexed the public mind, blinded the public eye, and placed you in sevile dependence on the man who is patient enough to interpret railway hieroglyphics.

In consequence of the usual oracular errors you have often to change carriages many times, to climb stairs, to shuffle along subterranean passages, to be nearly evaporated in windy stations, suffocated in close waiting-rooms, to run, jump, scamper, and rush about all day, carrying, or dropping, or forgetting your various moveables the while.

On reaching the last stage, ten miles from Drainland, the De Smiths were obliged to engage a very small, rickety fly, the driver of which soon took a wrong turn, and the

travellers found themselves, at five o'clock, upon a road from which the eye could range on either side over a desolate expanse of uninhabited country.

“An interesting landscape this,” said Mr. De Smith, while his wife was anticipating the probability of delaying the Drainland dinner, besides arriving so late as to be made nervously uncomfortable by the bustle of a hurried unpacking and a scrambling toilet.

After driving on for a couple of miles they met a man, who in answer to the question of which way they should go, answered that he was a stranger in these parts, and could not tell them.

Did anyone ever ask his way without finding that the person questioned, if not deaf, was just come to where he was for the first time? At length, by a cottager, they were told how to proceed; and after some further driving, entered Drainland Park gates at dusk.

A ring summoned several servants to the door, who ushered the De Smiths into the

drawing-rooms, which had evidently been prepared for the party, and consequently looked exceedingly uncomfortable.

If Mrs. De Smith thought that, in English country places, company came and went without disturbing the daily routine of the house, she was much mistaken. Except in very large mansions, the junior branches of the family are transferred to small rooms on an attic story. Edith and Ursula are perhaps bundled into a closet. Tom has been known, on emergencies, to sleep in the marble bath, the men-servants being made comfortable in the cellars, while the visitors honoured the family. Books, drawings, and papers get stowed into invisible places, so that, for a long time after the company depart, the distracted hosts can find nothing, and spend hours in fruitless hunts after the books they were reading, the drawings they were finishing, and that very important letter, received last week, which required an immediate

answer. The cause of all this confusion may be seen in the orderly condition of the best rooms, where everything is in a new place, the showy and costly ornaments presenting themselves first, and quite effacing the old plain, useful articles, now hidden in the shade, not to attract observation.

This periodical drilling for company has the advantage of spurring the domestics to extra activity—the plate is cleaned with care, the carriages are polished, the grounds are swept, and, happily too, this occasional bustle serves for excitement, when there is otherwise so very little to vary the daily routine of every-day rural monotony. The De Smiths, during this digression, entered the drawing-room, and found Lady Drainland ready to receive them, seated upon a sofa, where she placed Mrs. De Smith, to go through the catechism of civilities, to which so much time is devoted in the country for want of other subjects. Her ladyship was rather short, and very thin and pale—thin

red hair, thin nose, thin hands, and thin voice. Altogether, one of those women whom young men insist on marrying, against paternal remonstrance, rejecting a plump, healthy, clever girl, just because she is an heiress and agreeable to the family.

Lady Drainland possessed children of every sort and sex, size and age; there was always one just come; they appeared to be arriving every day, and she liked these incidental novelties exceedingly, and divided her time by their births, as the ancients did theirs by the Olympiads. She recollected how George the Fourth had just been crowned when Tommy was born, and St. Sebastian taken a week before her confinement of Eleanor. The last maternal periodical had joined the family six weeks before the De Smiths' visit.

In a little while, after the first greeting, several gentlemen appeared, some in game-keepers' dresses, others in hunting equipments, all damp and shaggy.

On Lady Drainland stating that the De Smiths had lost their way, a great outburst of excitement followed. Which road did they come? and how did they get out of their way? and where did they get into it again? And when one hunting gentleman said that they should have come to the gate through Rook's Lane, another declared that their road was decidedly by Beggars' Cross. Never was anything so animated as the discussion about several mistakes that kept a red-faced man from finding the hounds one day last year, and particulars of "that disaster of Billy's." "You know Billy, Drainland?"

"Oh yes, well!"

"I was near losing him from getting into a gap on that confounded road," said the red man.

By the commiseration expressed on Billy's account, Mrs. De Smith supposed that the red gentleman was speaking of a favourite son, instead of a promising colt.

Mrs. De Smith did not yet understand the value of hunters, or the importance of short cuts, and wondered why these gentlemen discussed the roads leading to Beggars' Cross and Rook's Lane with much more earnestness than she had heard the Northwest passage, or the source of the Nile questioned by scientific men in Paris. All were still arguing with vehemence on the same subject, when Lady Drainland asked Mrs. De Smith to go to her room, as it was time to dress for dinner; so both ladies left the gentlemen to continue their talk, till some bets, no doubt, rendered the dispute more interesting.

Lady Drainland ascended a fine, wide staircase, and Mrs. De Smith was ushered into a room, where Lady Drainland, who was the kindest of hostesses, after offers of tea, and information of the dinner hour, left her. The apartment was large, and rather gloomy, and certainly cool, for it had not been inhabited since before the

recent arrival of a superfluous Drainland, and the fire evidently had been too recently lighted to warm the atmosphere, or even the grate, which looked dark, cold, and polished. With a hope of improving it, Mrs. De Smith knocked the hard, loose coals into the fender; so, in despair, leaving it to itself, she rang for her maid.

Of course no maid came, and of course Mrs. De Smith rang again, with the same result; for the French Abigail was at that moment far away, running up a remote staircase, which led to a new wing of the house, invented with Elizabethan cunning to bewilder the ignorant, and to carry them with provoking lures always in the wrong direction. Poor Mrs. De Smith now began to fear that she never could be ready in time for dinner; and being of a very nervous temperament, at the end of a quarter of an hour she felt exceedingly uncomfortable and totally incapable. There were the boxes, to be sure, quite close to her, and

Mrs. De Smith had just hurt her ankle, in a tumble over one of them, placed in a convenient situation for such an accident.

Now, despairing of the maid's arrival, she began to undress, when every string got into a knot, every eye hooked with a tenacious hold a hook that did not belong to it. Still, she pulled off her gown, which pinioned her in some inexplicable manner, rendering her hands for the present quite superfluous. In such a plight how could she go to search for her maid? So she sat down near the door in feverish despair.

The maid did come at last, pretending to have lost her way where no one could understand her, and suppressing the real cause of delay, which was of another kind, for Mademoiselle had tarried in the passages, quite forgetting her mistress, overcome by the compliments of a dandy valet, who could speak a little French, and under the influence of whose attentions she also lost her memory, and could not remember

where things were packed. She next tried to put Mrs. De Smith's gown on backwards, insisting on turning the side of her new wreath to the front. Notwithstanding these delusions, Mrs. De Smith, fully attired at last, descended the wide staircase, to find the company all waiting for her in the drawing-room.

They then marshalled for dinner, and Mrs. De Smith was handed over to a tall, pallid man, who seated himself near her; while at the other side she found a fat old gentleman, with a very large mouth, full of long black teeth.

The prima donna of the party was naturally seated near Sir Drainland, while Lady Drainland's escort opposite, a small boy, was, of course, the great man of the party. Madame D'Albremont had been consigned to a burly gentleman-farmer, who spent his life in the district—a very suitable companion for the lively cosmopolite. Her ladyship of Drainland looked anything but

pleased, and cast sour glances at her guests when she perceived several gaps between them, with no hope of Banquo's ghost coming to fill up a vacant place.

That day Mrs. De Smith was to learn how many mishaps fall out between the cup and the lip in country hospitalities, and how the lord and lady for whom the party was made had sent a messenger at four o'clock to postpone their visit for three days, and how they were to arrive just as the other guests, summoned with great pains to meet them, would depart. The pleasant man had a swelled face, and sent with his shrinking little wife a silent son to replace him, people who were only invited as the anti-attrition to check his eccentric vivacity.

Lady Drainland felt assured that a singing girl caught a sore throat to annoy her, announcing a disability to perform before dinner, but not corroborating the information by any reduction of her usual appetite. In fact, everything went wrong, and the

worst disaster of all was the default of a young man to whom Lady Drainland intended to marry her eldest girl, Miss Adelaide. He never appeared at all. Even Sir John, usually regardless of minor disagreeables, wished the company assembled in any other part of the United Kingdom rather than where they were.

Seated at his well-supplied board, there was great expenditure, and trouble, and weariness volunteered to entertain a set of uninteresting people. There were elaborate dishes, splendid fruits, sparkling wines, and magnificent plate, all displayed for the enjoyment of acquaintances whom the Drainlands never wished to see, except as the absorbents of their domestic *ennui*, when invited to the family dinner in parties of two or three.

Mrs. De Smith admired the festive arrangements, and enjoyed the dinner, but her neighbours did not enhance her pleasure; for the fat man with the unmanage-

able teeth talked and sputtered, till Mrs. De Smith wished for her small pink parasol when he addressed her, to intercept the effects of his profuse garrulity. Then the pale youth started whenever she spoke to him, and seemed to lose his wits with fright at her civilities, muttering so inaudibly that Mrs. De Smith began to suspect that the most fashionable way of speaking was that by which you could be least understood.

The evening passed dully. Two Misses Drainland purred a duet; another scrambled at some piano gymnastics; then a pretty girl fiddled with a harp, gently pinching arpeggios, and tickling the upper little strings with catlike grace.

Mrs. De Smith listened and yawned behind her fan, while Madame D'Albremont and the old people played at cards. The fat man went to sleep, and Lady Drainland longed to consign all her guests to the arms of Morpheus, whose embrace she wished to last throughout the three succeeding days.

Next morning, all the ladies'-maids were to be seen running about the house in every direction with cups of tea and thick slices of bread and butter, dampers of the morning appetite; then the ladies were laced into tight silk gowns, and came rustling downstairs like showers of rain to breakfast. Then began the first act in the domestic drama of country life—the preliminary public meal, that is soon to be followed by another, and another, and another, till digestion becomes a business, if it be not a labour, to those who have more appetite than prudence. The gentlemen, of course, ate enormously; the ladies, as you know, had filled their mouths the minute their eyes were opened with bread and butter diluted with tea.

Hunting men, we know, require a vast amount of nourishment to supply strength for their arduous exertions. Railroad contractors can tell you how much beef and mutton will complete a mile of line; but

what a prodigious way could be made with all the meat consumed by these gentlemen who cross the country and back again five or six days in every week; a line might be cut with it at the side of the equinoctial, and beat the latter in the long run.

Much was said at breakfast of the day's prospects, where the hounds would find, how the scent might lie, and other anticipations of important concurrences rendered the conversation very exciting indeed. Many a battle has been fought and won with less premeditation; and when the horsemen assembled in the park, you would have fancied, from their eagerness and enthusiasm, that some glorious victory over their country's foe was really in prospect. There they sat, dressed in red, caparisoned *cap-à-pie*; and there was the huntsman who should lead them to glory; and there were the pawing, prancing, champing steeds, whose instincts, led by that of the dogs,

would bear their riders harmless through the fray.

They mount, they start, bright eyes beam upon them, white hands wave embroidered handkerchiefs after them, and soft voices issuing from ruby lips have whispered victory to these heroes of a thousand fields.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Nor do they trust their tongues alone,
But speak a language of their own;
Can read a nod, a shrug, a look,
Far better than a printed book;
Convey a libel in a frown,
And wink a reputation down;
Or, by the tossing of the fan,
Describe the lady and the man.”—SWIFT.

THE gentlemen are gone forth to kill animals; the ladies hope to kill time as best they may in the intervals of eating; they therefore sit down to work. At first a general silence prevails, so that even the lowing of distant cows is heard through the rural stillness, and sounds very melancholy in the absence of more lively noises.

“Pretty work yours, Madame D’Albremont—a poodle, is it not?” said Mrs.

Thorpe, who is a human sewing-machine herself.

“Dear me, no,” cried Miss Percy; “it’s a lioness, is it not, Mrs. De Smith?”

Miss Green sewed braid upon scarlet cloth in convolutions, such as active worms would accomplish; while Miss Drainland pecked at her finger with a crochet-needle, and read and murmured cabalistic figures and words out of a book upon her knee, as if she were weaving the web of the fates.

“You know, a friend of mine, Mrs. De Smith,” says Miss Green, “Mrs. Spencer Johnson, told me that she met you somewhere.”

“I am always there,” said Mrs. De Smith; “but I know her—she’s a pleasant woman, and I see a great deal of her.”

“Very pleasant,” says Mrs. Brown; “she’s very nice—perhaps a *little* bit affected.”

“Oh, how odd,” responds Mrs. De Smith; “I always say so, although De Smith de-

clares her to be a paragon; you are aware how she makes herself up altogether."

"Does she?" says Mrs. Brown, eagerly; "do tell me, is it white?"

"Well, a little of everything," replies Mrs. De Smith. Then follow critical comments on Mrs. Spencer Johnson, modified by palliating parentheses, not so much intended to extenuate Mrs. Spencer Johnson's foibles as to qualify Mrs. De Smith's ill-nature. The criticisms, at first piano, go on to a mad crescendo, till Mrs. Spencer Johnson is supposed to be the least in the world imprudent, and then, with culminating animosity, her improprieties are unanimously pronounced by the working committee to amount to real vices, and appear very comforting to the virtuous ladies that compose it.

"Do you know her sister?" breaks in Miss Green; "a pretty, nice woman."

Then follow slight commendations on the sister, at first counterbalanced by some

delicate criticism, leading to the enumeration of many small weaknesses and provoking oddities, each foible being neutralized, as the speaker pretends to wish, by some feeble, questionable eulogium of the poor absentee, till, after the first stone is thrown, a volley of censure follows that would annihilate any poor woman, were it constituted of heavier materials than females' words, things of no mechanical weight, it is true, but overwhelming enough, we all know, to crush any poor sister beneath their moral pressure.

Luncheon interrupts the familiar dialogue, and the ladies enjoy it amazingly. They have to fast, you must remember, till five o'clock, when the tea and bread and butter interlude will mitigate the pains of hunger, which might otherwise become unbearable, before their dinner at seven o'clock.

All now agree to walk, and retire accordingly to their rooms to get ready.

Did you ever wait for a lady who went to "put on her things," sir? Did you ever hold your hat in your hand, after having thrust your arms instantaneously into a loose wrapper, and wonder what was the process of putting on things? Have you not often calculated that you would put on and off again every article of your wardrobe, while Maria was tying that bonnet and cloak, and pulling on those elastic balmorals? Does your sex avenge this insult on shopping females, when your mother and sisters are kept waiting half an hour, business or pleasure calling them off in another direction, while the shopman in his fashionable emporium rushes off to his reserved stock to match their blue ribbon, and disappears up a winding staircase that seems to lead to a steeple, or plunges downward into that cellar, where he remains, regardless of time, and your relatives' agony, for an interminable period? Does he aggravate this vengeance by returning with blue ribbon

instead of pink, having lost their pattern and his memory on the journey?

Clever women, I believe, never lose sight of that young man, and when he proposes the ascent or descent to the reserved stock, insist on accompanying him everywhere, after which decision he finds the desired article in some adjacent drawer, instead of airing himself upon the leads, or practising the polka with another excursionist upon the basement floor.

On this occasion there was no waiting man, so the ladies took more time than usual to put on their things, and came down according to their natural temperaments—the energetic preceding the languid, who were followed by the dawdlers. The day did not look cheering as to weather, but the walk was pleasant in itself, and agreeable to the party, who enjoyed throughout a prospect of the good dinner which it would enable them to consume. Dumas pretends that we tame the British

female by over-feeding, which expends her energies in digestion and sheathes her nerves in fat. Fond of the country and its amusements, and its natural history, which Madame De Genlis sarcastically called "*les plaisirs innocents*," Lady Drainland loved pigs, and poultry, and pets, making such close intimacies with her live stock that it was like eating a friend when she consumed a wing of her speckled fowl, or took a slice of ham from the side of that late pig. She fattened them with thoughtful cruelty, and while the little chicken familiarly fed from her hand, was speculating on the value of its growth, and of the figure it would make now in a dressing-gown of white sauce, or after a more advanced life, with crawfish riding on his back like dragoons, held on by silver skewers. Mrs. De Smith thought that Lady Drainland's affection for a white Alderney cow was quite filial, or such as she might have felt for a human nurse, long ago, in her infancy.

There were pigs that could walk, called porkers, and others, too symmetrically fat to stand, called bacon pigs, all shown off by a small clownish Van Amburgh of domestic animals. Mrs. De Smith, unused to porcine habits and emanations, did not enjoy the exhibition, nor yet the dairy cows, amongst which, in great terror, she was requested to walk.

“Are they quiet, Lady Drainland? I really am very much frightened.”

“The most splendid milkers,” answered Lady Drainland.

“Yes, I daresay they may be milkers, but are they safe? The black fellow that seems to squint with his crooked horns appears to me very wicked-looking.”

Here this very cow, seeing Lady Drainland’s little dog running near Mrs. De Smith, made a bound towards him.

“Oh, mercy on us!” shrieked Mrs. De Smith, rushing to a gate, where she sank ankle deep in the mud trodden up there by the cattle. Extricating herself from it

with the loss of her new goloshes, she flew across the field, only pausing at the other side of the hedge, over which she saw the ugly cow nibbling the grass with the equanimity peculiar to maternal cowhood.

It was vain to look for the goloshes; they could not be fished out of the mud, so Mrs. De Smith, with her new-bronzed boots muddy, spoilt, and wet, did not enjoy the walk home through damp fields, by one of those short cuts which lead you through mire, and sand, and over slippery stiles, and down precipitous ditches, and amongst loose stones, supplying in trouble what they save in time.

Mrs. De Smith had now, wet and cold as she was, to step to the right to look at a pretty peep, now to rush towards the left to examine a peculiar tree—and worse than all, she was rowed home, over a misty lake, which she compared to the “Slough of Despond.” It was beautiful in fine weather, Lady Drainland assured her.

The house reached, a meal of course followed, tea and bread and butter filled up the interval till dinner, varied by half an hour's business at the toilet. The banquet was much animated by recitals of the day's exploits.

“By Jove! that was a good leap you took, Jones—and how restive is the brute that Tom Todd rides.”

“Bill Paget got a deuced bad fall; I wonder if his skull is fractured; you were near him, Dick.”

“I could not stop,” answered Dick.

“What brought Bobby Brunker out? His mother died yesterday.”

“Not half so bad as Billy Baker; his wife can't live two days, Dr. Walker says.”

“What would you have them do?” growls Sir John Drainland; “the meet here does not happen every day; a man can't lose such a good thing because his relations choose to be ill, or die just at the wrong time.”

Much honour was done to the dinner; the ladies afterwards fiddled again with crochet or pricked canvas, some flirting beside reclining Nimrods and lounging Acteons. Elderly married gentlemen, quite regardless of feminine approval, snored loudly from distant corners, while a fat man in a prominent place startled the nervous ladies with occasional snorts, recovering every now and then his senses, and his equilibrium, in time to ask through his nose what o'clock it was.

Next morning Lady Drainland took Mrs. De Smith to the market town, in a pretty pony carriage, which being a novel equipage, the little postillion knew would excite great admiration on this its first appearance; so he dashed through the street with rash vanity, nearly upsetting an old deaf gentleman, just stopping to wind up his watch in the middle of the high road. George looks round triumphantly on the little boys come out of school who are running after the carriage, with their faces dirty and their

noses red. They think him the happiest fellow alive, to be able to flog ponies instead of being flogged himself, as they are; still, some wish to be ponies, others that they were postillions, while a delicate little fellow with a bad cough wonders if the leathers which George wears are loose, or if they cling to him like that nasty warm plaster on his own chest.

Lady Drainland inquires at the draper's for red velvet, the young man rushes off to fetch it, and brings blue, which he hopes will answer as well. They next proceed to the milliner's, who runs wildly out of the shop with a serpent of white straw coiling round her feet, and suddenly overcome by Mrs. De Smith's Parisian bonnet, loses her hearing and her voice, and has no recollection of the scene afterwards, except her dread of Lady Drainland, and the surprise which bewildered her on seeing that beautiful yellow bird with the long tail perched on one side of the foreign lady's head.

Lady Drainland gets out of the carriage at the upholsterer's, and George walks the ponies about, occasionally frowning on his little followers, and thus considerably enhancing his importance. The boy in buttons, a shy youth, sneaks along the flags, followed by the admirers of infantry service, who try to open their eyes as wide as his, while those who learn arithmetic sum up the buttons that swarm upon his jacket.

Lady Drainland and Mrs. De Smith emerge from the shop, and are stowed away into the carriage, with a roll of window blind and a piece of matting, all of which compress to biscuits the cakes which Lady Drainland was taking for a present to the children, who suppose them to be foreign novelties in their new shape, and eat all up at their tea with very great zest.

All now trot off, followed by the scholars, who break out occasionally into a whoop of triumph which the ponies don't like. Some of the boys open the parsonage gate, think-

ing that George is going in there, but others, of more mature experience, do not lose their chance of following him much farther till they have neither breath nor soles to their stockings left, for which last deficiency their mothers whip them next morning.

Mrs. De Smith, at the end of same day's repetition of such amusements as I describe, cooled very much in her pastoral ardour, and wrote to a friend in Paris that De Balzac was right when he called country life *l'ennui organisé*. “I wonder how people can endure it, unless they like vegetation of all kinds, external and internal. Still, there is something admirable in the lives of these country families when they dispense charity, and counsel, and kindness around them, and show the world, for an example of all virtues, that good old ‘country gentleman,’ as the finest specimen of domestic worth that it produces.”

Some of the fine old English gentleman's amiable qualities had to be practised by Sir

John Drainland after the duties of hospitality were accomplished, when he heard of the provoking forgetfulness of his late guests, and saw the bustle it occasioned around him. During ten days Lady Drainland received letters from her late guests applying for sundry missing articles, which she declared the complainants must have lost before the honour of entertaining them was her privilege.

Miss Butler inquired on pink paper after a small pair of scissors; while Miss Green, in a letter so illegible that it took half an hour to decipher, begged that her thimble might be sought for somewhere. Old Mrs. Thompson threatened that she should not know a moment's peace till the spectacles were recovered, which she found next day in a corner of her pocket; and the harpist had missed two or three rings, soon after disarming herself to caress the harp.

One lady left a song in the thick of the music, and another had dropped her rings

into the washing-basin ; while a pocket-handkerchief with no mark was urgently asked for by the fat gentleman. Sundry moveables in the house were now overhauled to search for the missing property—work-boxes invaded, drawers ransacked, chair-covers removed by the servants, with all the vehemence of resentful honesty. Then the invaded laundry became a scene of such aggressive inroads that the maids' ill-temper there was reflected for the week after upon Lady Drainland's collars, out of which they seemed to have washed the white. Meanwhile, young women-servants came rushing after the Misses Drainland, with wearables which they found in dark corners—never, of course, being the missing articles, but others, to find owners for which circular letters had to be sent in all directions.

Some inconsiderate Abigail had carried off Lady Drainland's new patent goloshes, leaving her mistress's smaller pair behind,

into which Lady Drainland vainly tried to struggle, convinced that her feet were suddenly much swollen. Then Sir John missed the third volume of a borrowed novel which he was just finishing, and other books had equally disappeared, with Miss Louisa's parasol, and Master Robert's new silk umbrella; such depredations inducing the housekeeper, who was a soldier's widow, to declare that she had been entertaining a foraging party, who had plundered acock of her best marmalade.

A registered packet was now duly expedited with the bracelet; the pocket-handkerchief, neatly folded, followed; the rings were, of course, never found by the fishing-parties diving for them incessantly; neither the books nor other articles carried off from Drainland returned, these being, no doubt, the family's involuntary contribution to that store of articles accumulated by visiting Abigails, making miscellaneous collections to furnish the prospective "home of their

own" to which imaginary well-to-do husbands are always beckoning them.

In the midst of such confusion two young Drainlands were attacked with the consequences of repletion from over-eating themselves while the company was in the house, so that the apothecary brought them daily, in large bottles and small boxes, the moral of their stolen indulgence. Even Lady Drainland's dog suffered from the kindness of friends, and whined and wheezed in chorus with the cherub children, whose indigestion was exceedingly plaintive. At the end of a miserable week the family subsided to its normal state, but soon after began fresh exertions preparatory to the celebration of Mademoiselle D'Albremont's wedding.

CHAPTER IX.

“ The morn is up again, the dewy morn,
With breath all incense, and with cheeks all bloom,
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,
And living as if earth contained no tomb.”

THE morning air blew softly into Clelia’s window as she opened it at rising on her wedding-day. Fevered and weary after a sleepless night, she seated herself so as to enjoy a refreshing breeze upon her parched forehead. It was very early, and yet she had risen before, and looked beneath the windows to see that no one watched or waited near them. Unrefreshed and nervous, an irritable quickness of movement and an unusual brilliancy of her eyes bespoke the excitement which continued apprehension induced. She knew that for days this morbid agitation had upheld her,

and that it must last until the dreaded ceremony was over, or how could she go through it?

During these days, too, she had lived in ceaseless dread lest some untoward obstacle should yet prevent her marriage; and restless suspicion looked from her eyes, keeping incessant watch for something strange that she was ever expecting to see. She appeared as if listening for unusual sounds, and seeming to shrink within herself like one anxious to withdraw from action or observation.

With trembling hands the toilet was commenced, but when Louise appeared, her mistress had quite lost the power of doing anything further. At times like this the expert maid knew that Madame D'Albremont was not to be summoned, and always herself administered the restorative which was to calm poor Clelia's agitation. It now produced the usual effect; and when Madame D'Albremont entered the room

she found her daughter dressed, and again seated at the open window.

Never was a more lovely bride attired in a more graceful costume, and never did a more agitated heart impart its vibrating tremor to the orange-buds of a bridal wreath, appropriate tests that they are of maidenly diffidence.

As is usual in France, the veil and the flowers were the bridegroom's gift, and to these he added three rows of pearls that Neptune himself might have presented as a lover's gift to Venus. Two bridesmaids only were to grace the ceremony, for in those days the processions of them which fashion now musters were not usual.

The little church where the ceremony was to be performed stood in the Park; an aisle of stately horse-chestnuts, arched over by luxuriant branches, now yellow, though not seared by the golden legacy of summer, led to it. On the pathway their bright

orange leaves, recently shed, spread a gorgeous carpet, made more glowing by the light, which as it passed through the branches above brought with it a mellowed tint. Six pretty girls, dressed in white, preceded the bride, and scattered upon the yellow ground late roses, the last gifts of departing summer.

Led by her uncle, Clelia advanced, now calmed by the prospect of a solemn ceremony, but moving more like one in a trance than as if quite alive to the exciting scene around her. The village children cheered her heartily, the spectators stood uncovered, and under a laurel archway, on which her new cipher was formed in flowers, Clelia entered the church.

Now all followed the bridal party, standing at a respectful distance to gaze on their landlord's niece. Clelia at the altar looked like one petrified, so pale, so cold did she seem; but the impassiveness of her countenance was belied by the tremor of

her hand when Frederick took it in his, and ineffectually tried to place upon her finger the ring, which rolling down upon the flags, settled there with an ominous sound, that startled the bride from her apparent composure.

All was soon over, and the emotion, before repressed, expended itself now in tears that fell like dew upon her bridal bouquet, over which she bent to conceal them.

They walked back through the yellow avenue, the bells rang forth a merry peal, and congratulated them with their metal tongues; the peasantry took up the tone, and Clelia heard for the first time the hearty hurrah that British voices can best shout. She looked around her bewildered, seeming more astonished than happy, and still puzzled at the scene, as if it were one which she had never fully anticipated.

The carriage waited at the portico of Drainland; the bride changed her dress hurriedly, and in a few moments more was

handed into a travelling chariot by Sir Harry Ashworth.

“That’s well off our minds,” said the gay baronet, as he returned into the house, and prepared his mind for the enjoyment of a splendid breakfast; “she’s gone at last, Constance, and we are relieved from the dread that a change might come over her at the last moment, when she would declare that scoundrel Castelle to be the man of her heart. How do we know but that her hesitation and inconsistencies about Vivian may have resulted from an insane preference for your admirable conjurer?”

The breakfast was dull, as are in general such celebrations, with their usual stammered speeches and entangled compliments. But Sir Harry’s hyperbolical peroration met with general approval when he declared his sister to be a pattern of maternal devotion, Sir Drainland the prince of landlords and the prime of humanity, and Lady

Drainland the perfection of fecund human maternity.

In the evening a grand ball celebrated the bridal of the morning, and carriage-loads of neighbours poured at ten o'clock into Drainland Abbey, where Sir Harry flirted and danced simultaneously, his dress irreproachable, his manner most engaging.

Youths of the present time, you little know what perplexity disturbed the toilets of the gay baronet and your revered fathers ! Hair curled all over their heads in annular locks was twisted under a close-fitting nightcap—such was the torture endured in bed ; while by day, tight fits of coats and waistcoats, with buttons severely strained, that went off occasionally most unexpectedly like crackers, were met by inferior garments, small, as their name indicates, and so inaccessible that it was with difficulty the most agile beau or the most experienced veteran insinuated himself therein.

Poitier, the famous comic actor of the time, was made to say in a French farce to the tailor from whom a pair was ordered—*Si j'y entre je ne les prends pas.*"

Dancing gymnastics contemporary with these dresses sometimes produced unpleasant results, when, elevated with success, a "*cavalier seul*" executed a hazardous evolution, ending with a loud explosion, after which he had to retire, covered with shame and his partner's shawl, and be led out of the ball-room by grinning rivals. Ladies were equally encased in three breadths of fashionable material, which made sedentary positions as difficult for them as the active ones were for the other sex: hair rather dishevelled, no trimmings, and gloves that really were according to the old proverb, "as easy as an old glove," took little time to arrange. They had already discarded the earlier costume, which was completed by the evaporation of a wet petticoat, for there was but one, which

women with fine figures wore under the dress, to give themselves a classical appearance. Altogether, the Venus de' Medici style, fashionable in 1810, had gone out in 1822.

The young beauties of the ball at Drainland, with their short waists and shorter petticoats, bounded down the long line of partners forming the country dance, led off by Sir Harry with a vehemence that would affright their grandchildren, our floating angels surrounded by three atmospheres of illusion tulle—it would even startle those other young ladies who trot leisurely through the quadrille, their equine paces further confirmed by the projected elbows that remind one of a jockey's attitude in an easy canter. Madame D'Albremont danced and looked thoroughly happy in white satin, with a *saule pleureur* feather even longer than the fashion of the day required, languishing down over her left shoulder.

The effect of her dress was felt by the fat

farming gentleman who snored so audibly after Lady Drainland's dinner, greatly to the annoyance of Mrs. De Smith. He had never seen much of foreigners amongst human stock, they were rareties here in 1823, and this little Frenchified woman struck him as a new kind of animal, with which he was unacquainted. Her quick movements, bright eyes, and ready answers pleased him amazingly, and he wondered if all small quadrupeds abroad were as sharp as such bipeds. Having heard of his large agricultural undertakings, Madame D'Albremont supposed him to be rich, and therefore did not repel the civilities with which he favoured her.

She might not have been pleased to know that, mentally, he was comparing her to a Neapolitan pig when he looked at her dark skin and black hair, supposing that all foreigners, porcine or human, were black or swarthy. He questioned her indirectly on the subject, and when as-

sured that there were pigs as well as people of all complexions in France, he invited her to inspect the British animal; nor did he stop expatiating on its market value and progressive capabilities, till she began to consider if the importation of a few of the best breed into France would not be an excellent speculation. With this object she expressed unbounded interest in agricultural improvement, made the farming gentleman give her information which she repeated to him ten minutes afterwards as original, and convinced him after a short time that the little dark body was a remarkably clever, pleasant woman, and that she would be overjoyed to visit his pigs the next day. They were accordingly washed and combed to receive her when she called at three o'clock; and much did she admire the unwieldy beauties of maternal swine, surrounded by gorging, growing families, inheritors of the prizeworthy obesity of the Italian race.

Madame D'Albremont's admiration was next rewarded by a present of two playful young creatures, that she was to take with her to France, with the hope of turning them to profit in a country where pigs, at that time, had legs like greyhounds, that cleared all barriers, and made them as difficult to confine as deer.

Sir Harry, much amused with her acquisition, swore that he could not undertake to escort them to France; but it was at last settled that they were to be packed in hampers, and to be labelled sporting dogs, a measure which would ensure for them general respect. The baronet disliked all rural concerns, and did not make himself agreeable to his new acquaintances, always committing some agrarian outrage by ridiculing their tastes and habits, a liberty which they resented by censuring his affection when he pretended to think that cheese was a vegetable, and grew upon trees.

However much they disliked him, his sister won golden opinions from all. Besides making popularity a speculation, she always wanted people to listen to her, for even the prosecution of business transactions left much time on her hands. Those women who have no resources with which to occupy themselves are mostly so dependent on companionship for amusement that they must propitiate acquaintances, and thus distil from the dross of idleness a spurious spirit of adulterated civility, which passes for genuine benevolence in the estimation of good-natured people.

“Why don’t you marry your aboriginal friend, Constance?” said Sir Harry; “he seems inclined to spare you a part of the affection which his pigs now monopolize.”

“He is a very pleasant man,” answered Madame, “and as fat as his stock.”

“I don’t see, my good sister, why you should not take a third partner now where it seems to me that there is a choice of

adorers about you; take a rich hunting fellow, a hard rider, likely to be brought home to you on a door some day; and if not thus disposed of, he will hunt all the morning, sleep all the evening, and not give you much trouble."

"What should I do with him in the summer?" said Madame D'Albremont.

"Put him out at grass somewhere, let him chew the cud of hunting in the hot months —you could easily tame that sort of chap."

"You used to hunt yourself once, Harry."

"To be sure I did—never liked it—hunted to get myself on in the world; capital style of toadyism, you make acquaintances with the great proprietors, talk horse twaddle with them, praise their animals, admire their riding, provide a good stock of gossip for the meet, and get yourself invited to their houses, or at least recommended by their notice. The fox's tail is not the only tuft men hunt in the field, I can tell you, fair Constance."

“I daresay,” said Madame D’Albremont; “no doubt men marry off their daughters, and do a great deal of other business there.”

“I really believe, Constance,” said Sir Harry, “that you could put on a hunting-cap yourself, and dash into the field with such prospects, or would it not be better to run a steeple-chase for that very tall Squire Bruce who they all say is so exceedingly rich?”

Madame D’Albremont was ready for any scheme of the kind, but other parties did not seem as propitious as Sir Harry supposed, so that for the present her matrimonial views were obscured, and she had to postpone her third matrimonial settlement in life for the present, for the fat farming gentleman appeared to withdraw as she advanced; nor would she even have won at the steeple-chase, there were so many competitors starting for the tall man, who looked down *du haut de sa grandeur* on little Madame D’Albremont, and the other aspir-

ants to his favour. She therefore put aside her best dresses, reserving them for other times, and treated the lords of the soil with deceptive, dyed gowns, smartened up by her ingenuity, though not agreeing with Burns, that

“ It is just what is in it, and not what is on it,
That makes a’ people stare at Jock Robinson’s bonnet.”

*

CHAPTER X.

“Never from the birth,
Of time, were scattered o'er the glowing sky
More splendid colourings. Every varying hue
Of every beautiful thing on earth—the tints
Of Heaven's own Iris—all are in the west
On this delicious eve.”—CARRINGTON.

SIR HARRY now heard, to his great regret, that Annesley's creditors were at length satisfied. A maternal relation and god-father, hitherto resentful of the neglect with which the Courtville family treated him, had asked for an interview at the prison, during which he found Edward so humbled by misfortune and sickness that, although the motive of his visit had been to ascertain the extent of Lord Courtville's unkindness, and to expiate upon it in the unaristocratic circle in which he lived, still, finding Annes-

ley really penitent, and learning that he was much valued by his fellow-captives for the active sympathy which he ever afforded to sickness and sorrow, his better feelings were aroused, and prompted offers of pecuniary assistance to his unfortunate god-son.

This Mr. Simpson was an old bachelor, proprietor of all the oddities belonging to the situation; he was moreover a fierce Liberal, and in that so very outspoken that each of his friends thought of all the ills the gods can send, “defend us from our candid friend.”

For his noble relatives he expressed the most inveterate contempt, which had been first provoked by the insolence with which they treated him when accident brought them together; to tell the truth, Annesley in his palmy days had avoided Mr. Simpson, whose acquaintance was not desirable for a young man of fashion, considering this cousin with his house in the City, and the company occasionally assembled there, as

the acme of vulgarity. After having looked with a practised eye into Annesley's accounts, Mr. Simpson called soon again to assure him that the arrangements for his release had been completed. Annesley's thanks were fervently expressed, but Simpson soon interrupted them by saying—

“Remember, it is not because I want to act like a relation that I advance you this money, but that I believe you to be sincere in your repentance, and likely to become the only good member of your good-for-nothing family. I desire that my interference may be kept a secret, or they would otherwise fancy that I wish to publish our connexion, which I can assure them I consider more as a disgrace than an honour.”

“My dear sir,” said Annesley, “you must excuse them; they are led away by the prejudices and usages of the society in which they move.”

“Hang society!” said Simpson; “is not fashionable society a conspiracy against

nature to weaken your bodies, and consequently your minds, managing your moral and pecuniary affairs with equal indiscretion?"

"Perhaps not very advantageously," said Annesley, thinking of his own failures.

Then Simpson started on a verbal crusade against the world in general, and fashionable life in particular, adopting our modern philosopher's declaration, that "Great Britain has twenty-three millions of inhabitants —most of them fools."

"The sum of all your comments," said Annesley, "is, that you think men generally so very incapable, and that it is a miracle how the world goes on well, while such dullards are managing it."

"I wonder how they have sense enough to get through it at all," said Simpson.

Annesley, after some delay, emerged from his prison-house a much wiser and a better man than when he entered there. His health had latterly suffered from long con-

finement, and the medical man whom he consulted recommended for its restoration a change of climate, and the travelling that a land journey to the South of Europe would supply. The object he had in view would take him in that direction.

To do Annesley justice, he candidly detailed the circumstances of his position to Mr. Simpson before accepting the assistance which was to relieve him from his pecuniary dilemma. When he began the story of his French adventure, old Simpson interrupted him by saying, "Do not hurry over any of the details, of which I have already heard much, but now want well explained. Be good enough to enter into them fully. How did you first meet this poor girl, to whom Ashworth declares you are married?"

"You know," said Annesley, "that on my travels I joined an amusing, wild fellow, who was always seen at the military clubs in London—a Captain Benson, famous for his jokes and wit; he was ordered by medical

advisers to winter in the South, and having met at Nice, we agreed to make occasional pedestrian tours towards Genoa, and then along the coast of France. This man fell ill at a village where I did not like to leave him alone, and there we were compelled to remain a month in utter idleness and comparative solitude. During my idle wanderings I often found myself under the walls of a neighbouring convent, the romantic beauty of which I had previously heard much extolled. One evening, just as the sun was setting——”

“My dear fellow,” interrupted Simpson, “I don’t want to hear of the sun—it always rises, shines, and sets somewhere. Go on with your story.”

“But,” said Annesley, “you must allow that the scene in which circumstances occur often gives them its peculiar colouring. The natural beauties that surrounded Marie St. Clair enhanced her own charms; and the feelings, or rather the passion, that she in-

spired, partook of the glowing warmth of those southern skies."

"Go on, go on as you like," said Simpson, impatiently.

"Well," continued Annesley, "on this evening of our first meeting at the time the sun was sinking into the sea, but with its golden pencil of light had just painted a radiant landscape upon the sky, in which, above a lake of fire, arose a castle of gold, backed by purple mountains, of which the summits fused into a pink radiance, that again dissolved beneath the blue canopy above. I stood gazing with delight at varying beautiful appearances, that were continually dissolving into other pictures while I looked at them; then, turning in an opposite direction for a contrast to this glowing scene, I perceived that another spectator was there, equally watching the glorious sunset. A young girl sat upon the trunk of a felled tree not far distant; the outline of her figure, burnished by the

bright red light radiating from the horizon, which gave to the white drapery in which she was clothed an aerial appearance, enhanced by a background of olive-trees, then darkening with the coming shades of night.

“Our interview was brief; few words passed between us after she dropped a book, which I picked up, and perceiving that it was a description of the convent above, I asked some questions, which led to a short conversation between us.

“I met this beautiful girl frequently towards evening upon the picturesque shore, where she came to join me with the childish reliance of innocence, which should have protected her against the selfishness of my passion, did its intensity not blind me to all the impropriety of these interviews. Dreading detection, I now always crept stealthily under the walls of the convent, and ascending some steps cut in the rock, I found her daily within an embowered recess, overhung with luxuriant creepers, beautiful enough

to be the sanctuary of innocent love : it was desecrated by the evil thoughts of criminal purpose.

“One evening Marie sat waiting for me, just within the door which led to this retreat, and in a moment I perceived a change in her expression, which I at first ascribed to the necessity for discontinuing our meetings ; I thought that it now repressed the smile with which she ever greeted me, until I soon learnt that the prospect of an immediate departure from the convent occasioned this unusual gloom.

“‘We are to part,’ she said, mournfully, ‘for to-day I was told by the Abbess that an aunt of my father, who is going to spend a year in Italy, wishes me to accompany her, and will call for me at the expiration of this week.’

“Here the poor girl wept so piteously, and looked at me so pleadingly, that I then felt as if, to save her from the sorrow which she so much dreaded, I would have sacri-

ficed life itself. With urgent earnestness, which was at least then sincere, I asked her to escape with me far away from those restraints of which she complained. ‘Let us fly, Marie, to other lands, that are always bathed in the glorious sunny radiance which has so often brightened our interviews here —free as a bird you shall escape from this prison, and go where your fancy leads you, to enjoy life, and pleasure, and joy, followed by a worshipper—a slave—who exists but to realize your wishes. Will you, Marie —will you confide in me, and surrender yourself to the happiness which I can realize for both of us?’ Much more I said, until, after a look of doubt and displeasure, she turned from me, still silent, but firmly clasping my hand in hers with a convulsive grasp. Young and inexperienced as she was, an innate sense of propriety had made her wonder at my words; they startled her, flushed her cheek, and gave to her air a dignity which seemed instinctive, and yet

told me plainly that, child as she was, such proposals as mine had a meaning which she resented.

“Enchanted with the new expression of her countenance more, I fear, than by the rectitude which it bespoke, I asked her to be mine for ever, to accept my destiny, my life, my name, as well as my love, and to ratify the promise of unutterable devotion which I then made, by the rites of her church, that would render it indissoluble.

“The flush of delight with which her eyes first acknowledged this entreaty assured me that it was granted before her words spoke assent; and we parted after making arrangements that she should be ready the next night at sunset to follow me.

“As I walked slowly back to my temporary home, two miles distant from the convent, I had time to reflect on the rashness of my promises, and the impossibility of accomplishing them. It would be unjust to myself not to recur to the compunction

which followed the suggestion of false hope to the poor girl whom I had just left. It was true that her presence infatuated me, and that, under its influence, I thought nothing impossible that could please her, nothing wrong that would gratify my longing for her presence and her love. Released from the spell by which she fascinated my senses and my fancy, and reflecting more calmly on the future, as I walked leisurely along the shore, before returning to my friend Benson, I resolved on leaving the neighbourhood next day, and writing my farewell to Marie in a letter, which I would deposit near the secret door that had so well favoured our meetings.

“ Benson laughed at my scruples, ridiculed my timidity, and over two bottles of champagne, which we enjoyed together, planned the scheme to which I weakly assented. I was to assume his name, for Marie did not know mine, and had called me playfully only *mon cher*. Next evening

she waited for me as usual, and this time we left the recess, and descending the rock, carefully entered a boat with muffled oars, in which Benson sat, awaiting our arrival. We then skirted the shore, soon reaching a ruined church, where some reprobate acquaintance of Benson was prepared to perform the mock marriage ceremony.

“As if to render the situation more exciting, for his own amusement Benson only then informed me that it was impossible to procure a conveyance from the neighbouring village, and that the elopement must be deferred until the next night. Great was my astonishment and annoyance at this announcement; but I had no leisure to complain of it then, as time was precious, and Marie must return to the convent at once, for I dared not keep her near it till we could procure means of flight, nor could we walk to the neighbouring town, for Marie, when ascending some steps that led

to the church, had sprained her foot, and could not now use it without pain.

“The following evening, when everything was prepared for our departure, she might manage to reach the recess, and from thence I would bear her in my arms to the boat.

“Next day I made all the required arrangements myself, and again we waited beneath the convent walls, near which I ascended the steps, elated with the hope of finding Marie as eager as myself to escape from all the restraints that had hitherto separated us. Flying rather than climbing up the rock, I applied the key to the lock, which now to my amazement was blocked up from the inside; frantically I pushed the door, and regardless of the consequences of such sounds, I knocked at it, and called on Marie so loudly that Benson left the boat to run after me, and ascertain the cause of this imprudent disturbance. More collected than I was, he soon perceived a paper which lay on the ground near where I stood ; it

was tied round a stone, and had been thrown over the convent wall by Marie, in anticipation of my arrival. These words accounted for her absence! ‘We are betrayed, and may never meet again, for I am now threatened with seclusion for life.—Your own MARIE.’

“Poor girl,” continued Annesley, “she yielded, I am convinced, without a murmur, to her relative’s decision, for her obedience to these nuns and priests was implicit, and her dread of displeasing them seemed partly a relic of childish weakness, which they took care to foster.”

“A strange story, indeed,” said Mr. Simpson; “how did this poor girl get out of the convent? I thought that no one shut in by bolts and bars, and walls and gratings, could escape from such bondage?”

“Marie had accidentally found a mislaid key, that opened a door, concealed outside by creepers, which also hid the steps leading to it; near this, the natural recess, enclosed

on three sides, and decorated by luxuriant creepers, opened to the sea."

Again Mr. Simpson paused, and looked grave. "You soon forgot that poor young woman, my good friend," said he, "when you persuaded Miss Somerton to accept your addresses."

This was a bitter remark, and Annesley felt it keenly; he walked up and down the room for a minute or two, and then sitting again beside Mr. Simpson, leant his head upon a table which was near him.

Looking up, after a pause, he said, "The delusion of that past time surprises me now as much as it does you; it seems like a bygone, perplexing dream haunting the present; even darkening my happiness when I thought myself plighted to Agnes, although it never weakened my love for her—that increased daily, to an intensity which soon effaced the influence of all fainter feelings."

"You are like the rest of your family,

Edward," said Mr. Simpson, "very capricious, and romantic, and foolish; however, forget now the charms of all other fascinating ladies, and act like an honourable man; find out this first victim of your folly, and make her the best reparation you can for it."

" My lawyers as well as Miss Somerton's," said Annesley, " have been indefatigable in their efforts to trace her, but with no success. The convent in the gardens of which we met belongs to the Jesuits, and for some object of their own they have no doubt removed her beyond our reach; for days after our separation I distractedly sought her, and by my importunities at the convent gates provoked the authorities to *recommend* my departure from the neighbourhood. After a fortnight's fruitless search I left it."

" Your jocular friend Benson must have been seized with sudden qualms of conscience to secure the services of a real parson for your benefit."

“Conscience had little to do with his tricks, I fear,” said Annesley.

“It is the most perplexing affair I ever heard of in my life,” continued Simpson. “Did your conscientious friend Benson secure a certificate of the marriage from Howard?”

“He did,” answered Annesley; “and it was lost with some baggage on his arrival in India.”

“Then you have heard from him lately?”

“Yes,” answered Annesley; “only yesterday a letter arrived, which was written on his landing at Madras. In this he assures me that an ordained clergyman of the Church of England performed the marriage ceremony at Nevres, and that in the hurry of his own departure for India he forgot to give me this information before. From what I have heard lately, it appears to me that Benson considered the whole transaction a capital joke, for he actually after-

wards boasted of the amusement it had afforded him."

"I daresay that he destroyed the certificate himself, to complete his fun," said Simpson.

"It is not at all improbable," added Annesley.

"Bad—bad," muttered Simpson. "I was glad to hear from the lawyers," he continued, "that you gave a legal document to Miss Somerton, relinquishing all claims to her fortune. It was not a necessary proceeding under the circumstances, still, as an honourable man, you were right to adopt it." After a pause he continued, speaking as if to himself—"Married to both these women; I really believe no one but an Annesley could get into such a deuced scrape."

It was now settled that Edward should start for France, to visit the scene of his transgression, and to trace, if possible, the poor girl whom he had deceived, with the view of acknowledging her as a wife,

if the marriage was proved, or of rescuing her from any difficulties, pecuniary or domestic, which might have followed the discovery of her imprudence. From the lawyers Mr. Simpson learnt that Sir Harry Ashworth had interfered in Annesley's concerns; although not very explicit on the subject, old Simpson was too sharp not to penetrate their hidden meaning, and to perceive that this self-styled friend had some object in embarrassing Edward's affairs and prolonging his imprisonment.

CHAPTER XI.

“ I saw her ere regret had thrown
Its shadow o'er her lightness ;
As yet her heart no grief had known,
Her spirit lived in brightness.”

AT last all necessary arrangements being complete, our prodigal youth started for France, after taking leave of his benefactor, who did not spare parting advice, implying sarcastic censure of his former conduct. “ Don't be any longer a fool, my good fellow,” said he; “ remember that foibles are the proofs of imbecility, as crimes are the manifestations of madness—there is insanity in your father's family. Don't fall in love with the first pretty woman you meet; the dilemmas of sentiment you have found quite as distracting as the perplexities of debt; which you no

doubt studied in your late seclusion. Avoid now that other kind of prison where crime is prevented by the timely restraint which some members of your family have found very necessary."

As Annesley travelled along the road towards Dover, and passed the little inn where he had parted from Agnes, his feelings were anything but agreeable; in his lonely sick-room how often had he with memory revisited that scene, how in the wakeful nights of incipient fever had he dwelt on his misdeeds, until they appeared enormities for which he never could expect pardon, or after which he might never recover composure. Where was now the first object of his folly? what were now the prospects of his second victim, for whose happiness he would readily sacrifice life itself? Why should he live? why not by his own death release these miserable women from the bondage and disgrace with which he had requited their love? In the height of his

delirium he twice tried to carry out this sacrifice.

At Dover, when past the scene of his flight from Agnes, he grew calmer; and sat looking out from the hotel window at the sea, until the town was still, its silence intensified by the measured movements of the waves, that like the pulse of the sea beat softly on the beach, and creeping up the shingle, murmured a lullaby to the sleepers on shore. He looked out into the moonlit haze, through which ships were gliding smoothly along, in the settled calm—wanderers, mourners, exiles, criminals, were there, chafing at the languid winds that would not hasten them onwards to the happy destiny which they sought, or speed them away from the ill fortunes which they tried to escape. Then he recalled that other glorious sea in the South, the shores of which had been the scene of events likely, under any circumstances, to mar the happiness of his future life; for despondingly repentant as he was, conscience would ever embitter it with

those vivid reminiscences of the past which are the severest punishments of crime.

A stormy passage carried him next day to Boulogne, where amongst those idle compatriots who resided at that much-frequented place, of which a procession came down daily to witness the arrival of the miserable sea-stricken passengers, appeared Sir Harry Ashworth. He perpetually oscillated between the two countries, and was now waiting till the following day to continue one of his frequent journeys.

It was no wonder that the scene of a marine advent amused the vegetating English, living in those days like oysters attached to that French shore.

And what strange figures landed there on the beaches of Gaul? seven or eight hours' passage in a crowded cockle-shell being a bad preparation for the nonchalant air that gentlemanly smuggling should assume under the watchful eyes of the revenue Argus.

At the British side the trial was more perplexing, and many a timid Englishman and guilty belle betrayed their illegal enterprise by an unusual hurry to escape from the dreaded scrutiny of the custom-house. Persons remarkable for verbal truth brought over pretended swelled legs, bandaged with a dozen pair of silk stockings. Ladies were hung round, like modern Christmas-trees, with gloves, and jewellery, and toys, and all sorts of fancy articles that the scanty dress of the day was required to cover. Steady small men came home cased in silver armour like cuirassiers, breast and back plated with dinner-dishes. Woe to them if their characters warranted the familiar address of—

“The man who hails you Tom or Jack,
And proves by thumps upon your back
His sense of your great merit.”

For Tom or Jack, or Bill, would answer responsive to the touch with the clang of a dinner-gong.

Annesley, unincumbered with anything

more weighty than his thoughts, walked with Sir Harry to Desseins, where after a good dinner the two rivals sat over their wine to enjoy that male gossiping propensity which men are always so anxious to disclaim.

Now, Annesley was perfectly aware of Sir Harry's views on Miss Somerton, and of that wily gentleman's unwarrantable interference with his affairs under pretext of serving him; still, shut out for months from intercourse with anyone belonging to his own circle, and anxious to learn many particulars concerning Agnes, as well as the world's version of his own affairs, he gladly accepted Sir Harry's companionship. The latter had heard from his faithful lawyer of Annesley's release from all pecuniary difficulties, which was anything but agreeable intelligence; so that his appearance on board the packet seemed the least esteemed of any that were welcomed by uncertain friends that day on the quay.

Sir Harry pretended to be surprised at Edward's emancipation.

“ You are a deuced lucky fellow,” said he, “ to have been adopted by this Crœsus cousin,” when informed of all the circumstances of Annesley’s emancipation, “ instead of being kidnapped by legal officials for bigamy. Are you now in pursuit of a first or of a second Mrs. Annesley?”

“ It is no laughing matter,” said Annesley, seriously. “ I am off to-morrow for the South of France, to revisit the neighbourhood where I was guilty of such wicked folly, which appears to me now more like the proceeding of a madman than of one in the full possession of his sanity.”

“ I never could understand the affair thoroughly,” said Sir Harry, anxious to be better informed on a subject of such importance to himself. “ This Benson, who I know is an impudent practical joker, was your confidant and witness at the marriage, I suppose?”

“ Yes; and if I wished to exculpate myself I might ascribe much of my misconduct

to his influence and encouragement. He made me take his name, and, as you know, having picked up some reprobate fellow of his acquaintance, brought him to officiate at the chapel, where I wickedly consented to deceive poor Marie, pretending that the ceremony was performed by an ordained minister of our church."

"Well," interrupted Sir Harry, "this fellow was really an ordained clergyman, it seems."

"So I have learnt since," said Annesley; "and also that he is recently dead. Benson was ordered to join his regiment stationed in India immediately after the transaction. He seems averse to answer any of my queries, and tries to disclaim all participation in the affair, knowing that his respectable friend the clergyman is disposed of, and trusting to the nuns for keeping secrets which, if revealed, would be so disparaging to their convent."

"Well, then, my good fellow," said Sir

Harry, pretending to enforce Annesley's engagement to Agnes, "why can't you let the affair rest?—why plague yourself about a foolish freak which can have no consequences? It is true, to be sure, that this beautiful young foreign lady might claim you some day, just when you were beginning to doze life away in the bosom of a fine family; still she really has no right to you. Bigamy is also an awkward crime under some circumstances; but then the laws of France are unsettled as to marriage between persons of different religions, or merely performed in churches without municipal confirmation. She was under age, eh?"

"Barely sixteen," said Annesley. "But what signifies the quibbles of the law to a man of honour—would he regard them? Neither in this case could any religious, well-thinking woman consent to unite herself to a person who was even supposed to be bound by the rites of religion to another."

* “Certainly not,” said Sir Harry, really glad to confirm Annesley’s opinion. “I should be sorry to let my daughter pledge herself to a gentleman who might be the husband of some miserable creature pining in a dark convent, or of a lady enjoying the delights of matrimony with some innocent fellow, an unconscious substitute, in distant lands.”

Annesley thought how acutely another person must have felt the discovery of his deceit: he felt unwilling to allude to her, for he had heard that Sir Harry had tried lately to supplant him. Although longing to ask the questions which were uppermost in his mind, he yet felt that Sir Harry was the last person in the world by whom he would wish to hear them answered. There was no choice a little later, when the amiable baronet inquired if he meant to visit Paris on his way to the South. “You will find Mrs. Annesley Number Two quite established there by my very bustling sister,

and old Mrs. Jones disposed of, I believe in my heart, by the same active agency."

"I should like to see Agnes again," said Annesley, "though, under my present circumstances, I can only do so at a distance."

He wished to inquire if she seemed happy, or if the disagreeable position in which he had placed her seriously affected her; but a dislike to question Sir Harry on this point kept him silent.

"She is looking remarkably well," said Ashworth, "and grown handsomer than ever."

"Does she cultivate her talents for music and painting?" said Annesley.

"She has deserted the arts for the sciences," said Ashworth; "she studies magic, too, I fancy."

"She does what?" said Edward.

"Studies magic and mesmerism, and all the black arts besides, and learns them from an exceedingly handsome Italian sorcerer, who is desperately in love with her."

Annesley started, and knit his brows.

“ You are not going to monopolize all these women, I hope, Master Edward—so don’t look so very fierce. The old lady is lost to you already, if you ever had any intention of adding her to your seraglio; she decamped some weeks since with a fierce son of Mars, who has been beating her to a jelly ever since.”

“ What is the name of this Italian ?” said Annesley, affecting very great calmness of manner.

“ The beggar is called Castelle,” answered Ashworth; “ he has turned the heads of the whole party, and plays them off like so many puppets. Should the right of Mrs. Annesley Number Two to your worshipful person and property not be established, this Italian wizard will assume your conjugal place in the excellent establishment of the fair Agnes.”

Sir Harry’s remarks told well; he was quite satisfied with their effect, and rejoiced

at having shown Annesley that he need not be so sure of Miss Somerton's constancy, even were he fully released from his first engagement, and penitent enough to deserve forgiveness. The gentlemen parted that night, neither well pleased with the other, both occupied with speculations of which Agnes was the object. Annesley started the next day, early, for the South, while Sir Harry lounged at his toilette and breakfast with that total disregard for time which is characteristic of the man of fashion.

Annesley commenced his journey in the coupé of a diligence, and travelled night and day till he reached Marseilles, from whence he proceeded by sea to a town near the villages amongst which he had been detained during his unfortunate pedestrian journey three years before.

After resting for one day at a small inn which he well remembered, he commenced his walk towards the convent. There it stood, on an eminence above the sea, rising

out of a grove of orange and olive-trees, covering a slope which sank gradually to the shore. A high stone wall on the roadside surrounded a court in which the building stood; this impassable barrier took a wider circuit towards the sea, enclosing a portion of the orange-grove in which the nuns, no doubt, took their daily exercise, if any was allowed to their order, which was the strictest that had yet been revived in France since the Revolution. The high roofs with pigeon-hole windows—the turrets shut down with leaden dish-covers, or put out with extinguishers—presented a model such as modern architecture in England tries to imitate. Terraces surrounding the basement story were walled all round, while natural levels succeeded them in degrees till the sloping grove shelved continuously down to the water's edge. At one side these terraces were supported by a rock overgrown with shrubs and trees, through which a practised eye might dis-

tinguish an ascending footway near the summit on which the building stood. This path lost itself for all those who were not aware that, passing through a thicket which seemed impenetrable, it led again to the eminence, where a door, equally well concealed, was to be discovered by curious perseverance. This small gate was never opened for the purposes of the convent; it led into a rocky recess, half artificial, half constructed, where the nuns used formerly to pray.

A stone altar and a rough crucifix stood within it, all now covered by the ivy with which nature decked this little sanctuary that the sisters had neglected, considering it too pleasurable for the severities of penance, or for the duties of prayer. Here it was that Annesley sat, three years before, with the young creature who had attracted his wayward fancy, and who was to be the victim of a desire for excitement which his late seclusion had fostered.

After looking for a few moments at the spot where he first met Marie, he proceeded to the front gate of the convent and rang the visitors' bell there.

“ Could he be admitted?—could he speak to one of the nuns?” Both queries met with an unqualified denial, and the lay sisters stared at him, and wondered where he came from, not to have heard how rigid was the seclusion of the recluses of St. Augustin. They asked each other if he was a heathen?

“ There must be an officiating priest admitted into the convent; where does he live?” persisted Annesley.

“ He resides in a village close by.”

Thither Edward proceeded immediately, and was successful in securing an interview with the Rev. Father Jerome. Even Castelle could not have penetrated the thoughts of this close gentleman—a rhinoceros would have been more accessible, for folded up in a tough skin, the impenetrability of his mind

was expressed outwardly by the rigidity of a mummy. Cheops' guest himself might be more communicative, with his sealed wrapper of mysterious bandages, which some one in the course of time might read. A Jesuit's purposes are equally cemented into his being, illegible to any but to those hierophants who are entrusted with a key to popish hieroglyphics. The priest pretended to know nothing; he never heard of a young relative of the superior visiting the convent; he never knew Marie St. Clair during the five years of his ministry in the convent—he knew nothing about anyone.

Annesley, much awed by the solemnity of this human stick, still ventured to ask if it was possible to question the Abbess on the subject he had so much at heart. The Abbess was suffering from a serious complaint, and would not like to be troubled now with mundane concerns. He next suggested the expediency of questioning one of the elder nuns, entreating the priest to

procure this favour, or to learn the name, which he had unluckily forgotten, of a sister to the Abbess, the lady whom Marie was to accompany in a journey to Italy. Seeming to assent, the Jesuit bowed his visitor politely out of his house, promising to receive him the next day but one, and to communicate the result of his visit to the convent. Annesley returned again to sit on the gnarled tree near the sloping grove, settling plans for the future, in case he should hear that Marie might yet be discovered. "She has probably married some one else," he said to himself, "believing the ceremony to have been illegal; or she may be a nun, in this very convent that hangs on the ledge above my head. My wife in a convent!" thought Annesley; "that is a contingency which never occurred to me before. Perhaps this ossified fellow confesses her, and knows more of my affairs than I do myself;" and Annesley, with a new interest in the place, looked up at

the grated windows, and actually ascended the steps leading to the place of his former rendezvous. The door had been walled up: a horrid thought made him shudder; perhaps she, too, was walled up within the gloomy precincts of that building!

It was growing late, and Annesley, in no cheerful mood at the possibility of his misconduct leading to so terrible a catastrophe, hurried back to the little inn, where the business of digesting a recently slain hen, which had fulfilled her oviparous duties by laying as many eggs as time would permit through life, was now awaiting him. Other agreeable delicacies flanked the dowager bird; there was bread in loaves so hard and long that they might literally have been the staff of life; there was red ink intended to be drunk as wine; there were queer-looking black masses christened with fine names by the dirty waiter; there was an island of cabbage floating in a lake of oil, that looked as if

it had been already masticated; there was water in decanters with the aborigines enjoying aquatic sports in their own crystal palace. A cloth which decorated the table served for the nightly repose as well as for the daily repast, and began its newly-washed career with the dinatory purpose.

Annesley disposed of his nauseous meal with clever celerity, and then tried to take clear copies of some sketches which represented the orange-grove, with the verdure that crept down to the beach, and merged into the strand, in all the confidence of meridian security.

While he was thus engaged, the host, a very swarthy little man, with peninsular whiskers and pointed topknot, the fashion of the time, requested permission to play on the guitar to monsieur my lord. Edward's good-nature assented to the proposal, and the fantastic small amateur took

his position with a swing, brought up by a swagger, which highly amused our traveller, who saw that the performer was evidently practising the airs and graces which were to captivate the village belles, to whom he occasionally exhibited them, although married to a fat woman who emulated the denizens of the poultry-court in fecundity.

After going through many attitudes and grimaces, intended to express infelicitous love and despairing grief, Annesley stopped the performance by recurring to the subject of a previous conversation with the innkeeper.

“Did anyone ever see the nuns of the convent?”

“Oh dear, no,” said the little man; “their persons, their virtues, and their property are shut within the walls encircling the sanctuary. They keep themselves safe from the corruptions of the outer world, and, bent upon going to Heaven

without help or hindrance, leave their duties for others to perform."

"A very pleasant arrangement for them," said Annesley; "I wonder if they are ever tired of it."

"The Jesuits take care that the outer world shall never hear of their dissatisfaction," said the innkeeper.

"This padre must have a deal on his hands to keep them all quiet."

"He starves them," said the innkeeper; "and that is a sure way of repressing their energies; with little sleep, less food, and exhausting penances, they are soon reduced to blind obedience."

Annesley saw that the guitar-player was not a devoted worshipper of Father Jerome, and had opinions of his own which were not quite favourable to the Romish church.

"The dark padre seems stern enough to rule an army of these poor, half-fed creatures," said Annesley.

“He rules all the district besides,” answered the amateur. “When a man knows everyone’s secrets, and is acquainted with everybody’s character, is aware of their projects for the future, and informed of their conduct in the past, can he not play them off like puppets, calculate their future, sum up their past, subtract, and add, and divide, while the poor figures that he is working fall into the quotient which he requires?”

“What a philosopher!” thought Annesley; “he is a disciple of the Voltairian school, I suspect.”

With all his knowledge of priesthood, the secrets of the convent, however, were impenetrable to the innkeeper. He never heard of a Marie St. Clair there; had nuns names or social individualities? They all merged into the institution, their property into its funds.

“Lunatic asylums on a grand scale these institutions are,” said the innkeeper, “where

the priest prepares the retreat, and inspires the delusion."

"What masters of mediæval social art are the Jesuits!" thought Annesley.

CHAPTER XII.

“ The man I trust, if shy to me,
Shall find me as reserved as he ;
No subterfuge or pleading
Shall win my confidence again ;
I will by no means entertain
A spy on my proceeding.”

THE next day Annesley loitered about the old haunts, and in the evening his graceful host played boleros, interlarded with strictures on the priesthood.

Annesley arose early the succeeding morning; he was to see the Jesuit of the convent at three o'clock, and time lagged heavily till then. He walked along the coast towards the priest's house, and there found the fossil man as impassive as his prototypes of pre-adamite antiquity. Of course, he had nothing to report; no one had ever heard of

Marie St. Clair; she must have been some impostor who had deceived the young Englishman ; there was no egress from the garden ; the Abbess never had a relative visiting her ; the whole story seemed a delusion or a plot. Annesley, under the broad black eye of the Jesuit, stood convicted of madness or imposture. He was paralysed ! Reader, do you possess the peculiar yielding character which assents blindly to the assertions of a bullying accuser ?—do you go forth like that poor forlorn scapegoat, meek and dejected, at the behest of your enemy ?—or with the enviable audacity of the active recusative impulse, can you contradict him and declare that black is white, in defiance of his opinion and that of the world in general ? If you possess this latter quality, with the conviction of my own biological meanness, I honour your presence of mind and bow to your self-assertion ; while I feel convinced that were the most heinous crime suddenly

attributed to me, I should bend my miserable neck and express the most abject contrition for having committed an enormity the particulars of which had escaped my memory.

Annesley, disheartened, and humbled more by the hypocrisy of the priest than at the absence of the information which he looked for, sauntered away from the curé's house and soon returned to the inn to partake of a small stringy progeny of the prolific hen. The life of this juvenile pledge having been hastily sacrificed to the exigencies of the kitchen, it was prematurely tough. Tender as a chicken indeed! That comparison could not have been promulgated in Italy or the south of France.

The clever innkeeper may have anticipated this thought when he saw Annesley laboriously munching the wiry integuments with carnivorous ardour. He was not attuned to the guitar this evening; so,

taking his hat, he sauntered out towards the convent, determined to depart the next day.

The gnarled trunk was soon reached, and seating himself upon it he saw the sky darkening along the horizon, while streaky clouds announced the fierce winds that had not yet descended to the lowest range of the atmosphere; wild and jagged they flew with the currents overhead. The sea looked black from their reflection, its long waves seemed to be crested with white feathers, of which now and then a few flew wildly into the air, alighting upon the surrounding rocks.

Annesley sat reclining upon the old tree, indolently noting the indications of a coming storm, while the horizon merged into the waters and a dark mist spread above them. The wind, soon rising, murmured sounds like soft soothing music, to which he sank asleep on his rustic resting-place. But the winds and the sky and the

waves were not then his only company, for from behind a dark clump of trees two men watched him, and soon emerged, one to aim a blow which only struck his arm, while the other with a vigorous stroke felled him to the ground.

The night had commenced before he recovered consciousness; still there was light enough for him to perceive where he was before he could recall the incident which left him in this helpless condition. Pained and giddy, he arose and first looked in every direction to discover his cowardly assailants. Reflecting that it was unwise, by delaying longer on the spot, to provoke another attack, he skirted the convent wall and emerged on the road, instead of taking the circuitous path along the beach which he had hitherto preferred. After a most distressing walk he reached the inn, where the account of his adventure was received with great astonishment. Two hardy workmen were sent out to discover the

miscreants, while the innkeeper, shrugging his shoulders, whispered to Annesley—

“ You see what it is to meddle with priests and convents, monsieur. My lord had better not venture out again alone during his stay near such dangerous neighbours.”

No sooner had Annesley appeared in the neighbourhood of Lieufort than Castelle was informed of his arrival by Jerome, and the night on which he was felled to the ground by the two men, who left him there and flew from an apprehended surprise, the following letter was addressed to the chemist by the Jesuit priest:—

“ DEAR FRIEND,

“ I write in haste to beg that you will expedite your departure, and arrive as soon as possible, for you should have been here before. The Englishman, after giving me a great deal of trouble, has been attacked by robbers as he sat, towards

nightfall, on the beach beneath the convent walls. The assailants, apparently startled by some accidental noise, left him only insensible; the cowardly fellows saw him crawl away to send pursuers in all directions, from whom, however, they escaped, as you may guess, undiscovered. He is now effectually maimed, and chemical skill would I am sure greatly calm him and terminate quietly this disagreeable affair. Annette shall help to nurse this invalid and administer your remedies, and his illness will not only release us from a troublesome meddler, but conduce to the speedy fulfilment of your own wishes. I am sorry that the information which was to reveal the antecedents of the Rev. Mr. Howard, who is supposed to have performed the marriage ceremony between Capt. Benson and Marie St. Clair, or Clelia D'Albremont, will be of no avail for that purpose. We traced him, as you know, to Bordeaux, where he embarked for America,

while we succeeded in making other inquirers believe that he was dead.

“The complications of this affair are very intricate, beginning with that uncertain marriage, the frustrated elopement, and the discovery that Clelia had, through the influence of an English governess, determined on adopting the Protestant religion. Then her incarceration, you remember, was remitted when an oath, administered by the Abbess, bound her to conceal for ever this adventure, and her desire openly to relinquish the faith of her family. The marriage with Vivian was luckily promoted; and for this object I placed that trusty person Louise in the house, to influence Clelia in favour of this desirable event, which would probably check her Protestant tendencies, and also prevent Vivian from writing himself to Miss S——, who is so much opposed to our church: his wealth and influence were not to be lost to it.

“I regret exceedingly that your own

views were not known to me when this plan was so successfully enacted. Now that a marriage with Miss Somerton is your object, *it will be best promoted by your immediate arrival and careful attendance on the invalid prepared for you.* I write this letter lest it should miscarry in our own cipher.

“Your faithful Cousin,

“JEROME.”

Annesley's arm now pained him incessantly; he could not move it in any direction, and, anxious for surgical aid, he started early the ensuing morning for Lieufort, where he stopped at a very indifferent-looking inn, recommended as the best in the place by his late landlord. His new host gave him a tolerably comfortable bedroom, and a smart hostess soon appeared full of condolence and civility. There was then, she said, in the house a gentleman lately arrived from Paris, who was very

learned in all kinds of illness, and she would ask him to come and see the wounded arm at once. After a little delay she returned ushering in Castelle; some inevitable delay retarded his advent, but he had been for twenty-four hours at Lieufort. Annesley little knew how his journey to the South had occasioned this subsequent arrival, nor could he suspect that the hard priest received intimation of his object long before their first interview; Castelle was certainly no partisan of Jesuitism, but when it suited his purpose the springs of that great machine were moved by his ingenuity. Quite aware of Annesley's accident, well versed too in the proceedings of the previous days, he expected the arrival of the Englishman, which was so unlooked for by his hostess, who when they were near Annesley's room, was desired by the chemist not to name him yet to the invalid.

When Castelle walked towards his new patient the extraordinary beauty of his face

and the manly symmetry of his figure seemed to take a grander character than usual in the low, shabby room, and Annesley thought that he had never seen a handsomer person. The wound examined and dressed, a temporary sofa was arranged for Annesley's ease, and Castelle sat beside him, with courteous attention anticipating his wants and wishes. At last, after making himself exceedingly agreeable, he retired, and Annesley inquired of the waiter, who had not been enjoined secrecy, the name of his new friend; great was the surprise with which he heard that the learned Adonis was his hated rival.

"So this then is the magician who Sir Harry says enthrals everyone with some secret spell," thought Annesley. "This is the adorer of Agnes, the fellow who is to supplant us all in her good graces, confound him. I think that I will tear off all this bandaging, for I don't want to be indebted to a rascal whom I must hate."

Suiting the act to the word, Annesley gave so vigorous a pull at the covering of his wound, that he could not repress the cry of pain which it extorted. A little subdued by this twinge, he began to consider the difficulties of his position; he recollects how Castelle had declared that a country practitioner might have insisted on removing the arm. "Needs must," he said to himself; "it is better to bear the fellow's civility than to be maimed for life. What brought him here? How strange it is that these miscreants of yesterday have prepared this intimacy, which is unbearable to me. I'll go off somewhere to-morrow. I wont stand this Adonis any longer." Another jerk of impatience and another twinge finished this monologue with a few exclamations, which would not look very respectable in print.

Annesley spent a restless night, but Castelle applied some ointment the next day which was to effect wonders; he sent

a queer-looking old woman, the landlady's mother, to attend his patient, no other than Annette, to whom you were introduced in the early chapters of this book. She had then grown yellower and more shrivelled, and was not an agreeable object for a sick man to look at. It would even be pleasanter to study the pattern and count the spots on the opposite wall according to the practice of all bed-ridden unfortunates, than to fix one's eyes on her wrinkled face.

“Have you known Mons. Castelle a long time?” said Annesley to the old lady one night as she sat up with him.

“A very long time,” replied the old lady. “I nursed him as a baby.”

“The deuce you did,” said Annesley; “he is a very clever fellow I suppose.”

“Oh, sir,” said Annette, “there is not such another in the country.”

“Now, Mrs. Annette, will you tell me why, if you reared this great man from his birth, fed him on pap, and swathed him in

swaddling clothes, according to the strange fashion of this country, why are you afraid of him? why do you never look him in the face, shake when he speaks to you, and get out of his way whenever it is possible?"

The old woman seemed puzzled, and evidently did not know what to answer. The conversation was interrupted; but Annesley remarked with surprise that his nurse's side glancings and averted eyes, when Castelle addressed her, continued. Annesley felt no better; the wound would not heal, and what had been a local ailment now affected him constitutionally.

"Your nursling is poisoning me," he said one day to Annette, and was much surprised at the earnestness with which she denied an assertion that had been made in joke.

Not long after this he perceived that when Castelle had applied the ointment to his arm, Annette, on his departure, always insisted on rearranging the bandages; he observed, too, she opened the binding again,

before Castelle examined it. He could not understand this interference with the doctor's management, and asked her why she was always disturbing the wound.

"Oh, sir," said she, "old women understand dressing wounds better than the young practitioners; they left a great deal to us at the hospital in which I nursed so long, for it is now twenty years since I began my profession."

"You seem very clever," said Annesley; "but I think Mr. Castelle would not be pleased if he saw how much you meddle with his work."

"Oh pray, sir," said she, "for the world do not tell him that I do so; he would never employ me again, and I have nothing to live on in my old days but what I earn by nursing, and besides going out as I do to private patients, [I get employed at the hospital, though I am so old, if they want extra hands.]"

Annette's daughter, the landlady, was most kind to Annesley, and used to bring

him some little fruit or flower daily. The morning after Annesley's conversation with his nurse about her surgical skill, Castelle received a note by post from a person in the next village, who transacted business for him there, and now requested that Castelle would come at once to his house on an affair of the greatest importance. The same day the landlady brought a note to Annesley, signed anonymous, in which a well-wisher recommended him to leave Lieufort at once, for reasons which were not the less urgent from not being stated. It assured Annesley that at Avignon the surgeon was a very practised man, and certain to restore him to health in a very short time. Annesley had become very much dissatisfied with Castelle's treatment, since his appetite was impaired, and a great general uneasiness now induced him to meditate a removal before this extraordinary communication arrived. Annette could not contain her joy when Annesley announced his intention of de-

parting next day, and she insisted on dressing his arm herself before he departed, with some ointment substituted before for that which Castelle used. Annesley had always seen her throw into the fire the bandages which Castelle had bound.

Leaving a very kind and grateful letter for the physician, he invented some excellent reason for proceeding to Avignon, where he begged Castelle would visit him—intending, however, to put himself entirely into the hands of the other practitioner without giving Castelle a voice in his treatment. Annette helped him to pack, while he begged her to express his thanks to Castelle for much past attention, adding that her nursling was a wonderful man.

“That he is,” said Mrs. Annette, looking mysterious. “The things I have seen him do would make your hair stand on end.”

“What can he do?” said Annesley, rather amused.

“Well, sir,” said Annette, coming nearer

to whisper in his ear, “he brings people to life after they are dead; I have seen him do it.”

“ That is wonderful, indeed,” said Annesley, smiling. “ I hope he does not put them to death first?”

Annette looked more mysterious now, and whispered closer in a tremulous voice, remembering the revival of Vivian the previous year.

“ I have seen him do *that*.”

“ You have?” said Annesley.

“ And,” continued Annette, “ he throws people into fits by thinking of them, and he makes them do what he likes by wishing it; and when he chooses he has an evil eye, and he killed old Peter’s young cow by just staring at her: she never gave any milk after, and went off in a decline. And a pig that I knew he spoke to once, and it never stopped grunting afterwards, they said, in an unknown tongue, and——” The old woman would have gone on till now, telling of Castelle’s exploits, if Annesley had not sent her

downstairs to desire the servant to take his luggage to the diligence.

He soon reached his destination, and in a short time benefited so much by the treatment of the clever surgeon that he left the South of France nearly recovered ; the constitutional failure was more difficult to correct than the local complaint ; and the doctor could not understand it. He once asked Annesley if he had taken anything deleterious or been exposed to a noxious atmosphere ? To these questions Edward answered negatively, and named Castelle as the person who had treated him.

“ He is one of our rising chemists,” said the surgeon, “ and he knows the nature of all the substances we employ too well to misuse them. I will write to him about your case, however, for there is something puzzling in it, and I should like to learn his opinion of the symptoms, which are so like those of poisoning.”

Annesley did not notice these remarks at

the time, but they recurred to his mind afterwards, and supplied evidence against Castelle later.

Annesley now returned to Paris, where he consulted some of the best medical men of the time, remaining there but for a few days, and then settling at a quiet little villa near Passy, where he received no visitors. He heard from his servants occasionally of Sir Harry, who was frequently visiting his sister, but did not feel the least inclined to vary his solitude by the presence of so very restless and flighty a visitor; while the baronet, rejoiced at Annesley's determination of remaining in seclusion away from the chances of meeting Miss Somerton, did not wish to see him in her neighbourhood.

CHAPTER XIII.

The poets are confined to narrow space,
To speak the language of their native place ;
The painter widely stretches his command,
His pencil speaks the tongue of every land."

SIR HARRY might have been very unwilling indeed to attend any summons that would call him away from Paris, where he had arrived soon after Clelia's wedding, declaring that the country disagreed with him—that he could not stand being long out at grass there. Besides, he was now most agreeably engaged escorting Agnes to see sights, to listen to concerts, and inspect paintings. One day he proposed taking the ladies to visit a clever Italian artiste who had been lately recommended to him. Agnes readily accepted his project, and the next morning all three proceeded to the

house of Sir Harry's protégée. An old man, with flowing white locks, and a splendid head, opened the door, and ushered them into a small but very clean apartment, in the second room of which they found a beautiful girl sitting at an easel, copying a figure of the Madonna with a face as lovely as her own. Leonora, you remember, left her cottage in the country when Clairville was deserted, and she had now worked assiduously at this painting since her return to Paris.

Her appearance, grace, and manner pleased Agnes exceedingly; and even Miss Williams admired her cordially as a specimen of self-sustaining female energy. The old man, with loving eyes, looked at his child, and then at the two ladies, delighted with their evident approval of her skill. Great was Leonora's surprise on finding in Sir Harry Ashworth's friend the lady whom she supposed to be the confidant of Castelle in his love-affair with the beautiful blonde.

Agnes she had then thought handsome, with her large soft blue eyes and dark hair; and the smile of benignity that softened her countenance now touched the warm heart of the young Italian, who, with the fervour of her southern nature, was ever as eager to accept kindness as to resent enmity.

They were not long with the artiste before they were diverted from her and her work by the attraction of a gorgeous painting which hung at one end of the room, receiving a light thrown upon it from a window which seemed placed there on purpose to display its excellence. A female figure, like the Spirit of Promise, appeared to descend from the sun, and to rest upon a rainbow that floated in mid-air, bringing this messenger of hope to earth through the mists that were never again to condense into waters such as those which had once submerged it. Agnes's enthusiasm was unbounded; she had never seen such a painting.

There was the perfection of human beauty, but reflected from a human mind, and vivified by a divine genius; there was the unity of interest which should in painting confine our attention to the principal figures and the chief purpose. No petty details frittered art into the trivialities which it should abjure when reproducing the beautiful and the grand to elevate the mind above the mechanism of life or the common-place appearances of ordinary nature. The colouring equally effected one object, secured one result, subservient to the rules of art as well as to the laws of optics.

“But who is that?” whispered Agnes to Sir Harry—“who is that young man listlessly seated before the grand picture, as if he did not know what it meant?”

“He,” said Sir Harry, taking her aside, “is the painter of this splendid work, and of many others which you have often admired—Ernest D’Arval.”

“Is it possible?” said Agnes, looking at

the poor idiot with the greatest interest. “I remember, now, having heard that he was imbecile. Does he sit in that way all day gazing so abstractedly at his own chef-d’œuvre?”

“No,” said Sir Harry, “he draws a little occasionally, and some benevolent artists, thinking that the sight of his favourite picture would stimulate him to wholesome exertions, have borrowed it from the gentleman to whom it belongs, to place it before him.”

Agnes, after purchasing a drawing from Leonora, returned home, and invited Sir Harry to spend the evening in the Rue Rivoli. The summons was gladly obeyed; and soon after his arrival, Agnes inquired how the poor artist, in whom she felt great interest, had lost his intellect.

“I have come to you very early,” said the baronet, “on purpose to tell you his story. He did not finish the narrative that night, being often interrupted by his com-

panion's questions, which I will omit here, and relate it continuously.

“I need not tell you,” Miss Somerton,” said Sir Harry, “how celebrated are the paintings of D’Arval. The beauties which nature distributes amongst her loveliest daughters he culled from each, combining with artistic skill, and harmonizing qualities that nature had never approximated. His success in portraying perfect loveliness far surpassed that of cotemporary artists, and equalled, if it did not transcend, the achievements of the old masters. A splendid picture representing the youthful Psyche, had secured to D’Arval on his return from Rome a celebrity which at once ranked him amongst the best painters of the day; it displayed the bright conception of an ardent imagination, miraculously realized in a picture which seemed more perfect than the work of mortal hand. The creation of his mind, this figure was ever present to it; in the silence of his solitary wander-

ings, into the quiet of his retired home, did the image accompany him. Like a familiar spirit, it became his inseparable companion, which he mentally endowed with a congenial mind combining all the fine qualities that constitute the moral beauty of female nature.

“Becoming daily more celebrated, young D’Arval still remained personally unknown to the admirers of his genius, for painting absorbed him, excluding all other thoughts but those arising from a fancied communion with the lovely vision, in which he made her express the sentiments of a transcendent nature.

“Shortly after the completion of one of his best pictures, the heat of a sultry September began to affect D’Arval’s health, already impaired by constant application to the newly finished painting. Advised to remain as much as possible in the open air, he no longer devoted the mid-day hours to study. Persevering in this salutary idleness, he one day strolled through the shady walks

of the Jardin des Plantes, intending to enjoy beneath their foliage a few hours of soothing rest. The gardens were nearly deserted. Here and there a student sauntered slowly along, escaped from his college to spend a few hours in this quiet retreat; while some old people, dozing through the remnant of a weary life, sat enjoying their well-earned repose on benches placed beneath the thickest trees, near young drowsy nurslings slumbering away the fatigues of their new existence in the arms of careful attendants. The air itself was soporific, and lulled the mind to a repose in which the body readily participated.

“ Ernest walked on, absorbed in his usual reveries, and, almost unconsciously taking the direction of the Museum, he entered a lower room of the building; spacious and cool, it afforded an agreeable contrast to the air without, and Ernest advanced to seat himself on a bench towards the centre of the apartment. Unconscious of all around, he

did not for some moments perceive that a lady had preceded him. There was nothing peculiar in the circumstance, but the mind makes its own romance; and he watched the movements of his companion with curious anxiety and a vague feeling that they ought to have more than ordinary interest for him, while she continued her examination of the mineralogical collection that seemed to him interminable. They were now quite alone, nor did a sound indicate the vicinity of others, for the same stillness that reigned through the garden prevailed within, enhanced by the shade of a long and cool vestibule. Ernest remained motionless, while, scarcely breathing, he imagined a face to correspond with the lovely figure before him. Pretty feet, a graceful and rounded waist, height proportioned to the whole, combined to produce a form of perfect symmetry. A rich mass of dark hair showered over her shoulders when her little hat fell to the ground, and on turning to recover it,

the young girl's face beamed like a meteor upon Ernest. Words cannot express the delight of that moment when his Psyche seemed embodied before him. The beau-ideal of his fancy, the Venus of his art, stood there in living reality. Entranced, stupefied, Ernest was transfixed, while the young beauty's confusion prevented her from remarking his awkward surprise. But he entirely forgot his habitual courtesy; and perhaps silence was a homage far more flattering to the young beauty than the conventional salutation usual in France.

"He never mentioned how it occurred, but in a short time the surrounding curiosities afforded topics for conversation, by which he discovered that the fair student examined with a tutored eye the objects of science around them. She said that, accompanied by a brother, her intention was to walk through the adjacent gardens when he returned from transacting some business in the neighbourhood, and that in the mean

time she had entered that quiet room to wait for him.

“Ernest perceived that Psyche, as he mentally called her, seemed anxious for the arrival of her brother, and although not wishing to appear obtrusive, he felt that to depart now was impossible; so he tarried, in the hope that some circumstance would occur to establish a permanent acquaintance with his new divinity.

“The heat, hitherto oppressive, increased, and now large drops of rain fell slowly and heavily, and the sky that had been blue darkened and lowered with the gloom of a sudden storm. This change furnished a pretext for remaining. Ernest closed the windows to secure them from the coming tempest, seeming to consider his stay necessary for the protection of his young companion, and she appeared to acquiesce in this conclusion.

“The fearful thunder that rolled past, and the vivid lightning announcing it, furnished

a community of danger which encouraged their precocious acquaintance. The elements, Ernest's former companions, did not now, as usual, call him out to note their terrible conflict ; but the effect of terror on his Psyche's face was watched instead. The lightning grew more frequent, and as its blue effulgence glared over her pale features, and as the thunder contracted her open brow with terror, he gazed in wonder on this indication of the same emotions which he had so often depicted, when indulging the fancy of painting his Psyche under the influence of every exciting impression. She now became anxious for her brother's safety, and Ernest, of course, proposed a thousand impossibilities. One of the attendants entering to secure the windows, gave a startling account of the storm : it had destroyed a neighbouring building, and his description enhanced the apprehensions of the young lady, which you may be sure her companion did not wish entirely to alleviate.

“The tempests of nature, as well as the storms of life, must end; and the thunder ceased and the wind abated, though perpendicular rain fell in that sulky, lingering manner which affords no hope of its discontinuance. A carriage was now heard approaching; it entered the court, and a young man alighting from it, congratulated Ernest’s companion upon her safety and his success in procuring a conveyance home. The coachman was impatient; the young man desired “Eulalie” to follow him, and in one more second she entered the carriage, assisted by Ernest, to whom she made a courteous bow, and offered more courteous thanks as the clattering vehicle drove from the door. The young man touched his hat, Ernest’s was in his hand, but not until the chill of ceaseless rain had penetrated through his summer clothing did he move from the place where he last gazed on that lovely impersonation of his ideal Psyche.

“The *garde* was actively preparing to close

the Museum, when Ernest turned from the door. It was already evening, and the last two hours had appeared to him but as one moment. He returned to the spot which Psyche had last occupied in the room, and mentally recalled her words, her looks, and her movements during the past interview. Was she a vision, or did he endow some ordinary being with the embellishments of fancy? —had some magic power invested a living mortal with the beauties of his imaginary Psyche?

“A summons from the *garde* soon disturbed his engrossing surmises, for it was time to retire for the night from the Museum. Casting a last look around the space which would henceforth become the sanctuary of his thoughts, Ernest walked forth, insensible to the rain that fell in slow regularity from a grey, dark, monotonous sky; instinctively he reached home, and when the Psyches of his pencil again appeared there before him, lovely as they were in varying

attitudes and diversified expression, still to him they appeared like mockeries of the beauties which nature had modelled in the person of Eulalie.

“From this time Ernest’s pursuits changed; the same head, the same figure, still occupied his pencil, while his artistic efforts were often remitted to make vain efforts for another meeting with the original. The Jardin des Plantes became his constant haunt, and other collections of minerals were daily visited in the hope of finding her amidst the subjects of a favourite study; but all his efforts were fruitless. How did he now lament the confusion which prevented his inquiring her address. Why did he not speak to her brother? Or was it her brother? might she not be the wife of another? With such questions, and answers equally unsatisfactory, did our artist torment himself.

“I will not accompany him in his unavailing pursuit, nor watch the pencil which seemed to steal from light its colours

to clothe his productions with more than even mortal beauty when reproducing the real instead of the ideal Psyche. For months Ernest had a strange and fitful life; perhaps the unusual excitement of that period gave vigour to his conceptions and an admirable facility to his execution.

“One day Charles Breton, an old school friend, called to request that Ernest would extricate him from a professional difficulty of some delicacy. Summoned by the illness of a relation to his native place, this young man relinquished for the time all pecuniary engagements, but amongst them was one in which he hoped Ernest would kindly become his substitute. Careless of emolument himself, Ernest still always promoted the interest of others; warmly promising therefore to accede to his friend’s proposal, he inquired particularly as to the means of its accomplishment. The young painter now explained that a portrait was the object in question; for a bereaved mother



had implored him to take a likeness of her child, who for the last six months had been confined in the Lunatic Asylum of Doctor Roget, at Vincennes.

“ ‘I am not acquainted with the family,’ said Charles, ‘but have heard their story, which is most touching. Madame Preville, an aged widow, lost her favourite son at the battle of T——, where he fell a victim to his own bravery. Grief for the death of this young man soon disordered the intellects of her remaining child, a young woman of eighteen, remarkable for the kindness of her disposition, and for personal beauty of a very rare character. You will be required to take this poor girl’s likeness, changed as she is by a distressing malady. The poor mother wishes to ascertain if her child is much altered, for they cannot meet now that an interview with relatives in cases of mental disease is totally forbidden by the recent fiat of medical authority.’

“Ernest, always alive to the misfortunes of others, and now more than ever inclined to sympathize with tender feelings, gave a ready acquiescence to the proposal, and the next morning Charles conveyed him at the appointed time to Vincennes. The day recalled that in the past year, which had since so much influenced Ernest’s feelings, and as the two young men drove along the gloomy road to their destination, our artist became silent and pre-occupied. The same kind of calm foreboded the impending storm, the same black clouds seemed to depress the spirit of life to its lowest level; the sun occasionally disappearing behind dark gathering clouds, and again as suddenly lighting up the dreary landscape. The arid district and the dull atmosphere made an unusual impression upon the young D’Arval, now that he was about to visit the retreat of misery, where, severed from the natural companions of their joys and their sorrows, pined the child,

the wife, or the parent of those who in greater misery mourned alone in their deserted homes—deserted even more than when a fancied communion with the departed spirit of a lost friend renders the want of his actual presence less painful.

“‘That,’ said Charles, ‘is Dr. Roget’s villa, and never did it contain so interesting and lovely an inmate as Mademoiselle Preville.’

“‘How afflicting is her misfortune,’ replied Ernest, ‘to be so young incapacitated for the enjoyments of life and its affections, is a living death.’

“‘It is indeed a cruel destiny; I have never seen Mademoiselle Preville, but so much is said of this interesting family that my anxiety is great for the success of your undertaking.’

“In a few minutes more our young men reached the Asylum. They were ushered into a large reception-room, where Dr. Roget soon appeared, inviting Ernest to

accompany him to Mademoiselle Preville's apartment as soon as Charles started on his return to Paris.

“‘This poor young girl’s malady,’ said the physician, ‘is not of a violent nature, nor is the serenity of her former manner much altered; you will find her quiet and silent.’

“From a passage communicating with many other rooms, Dr. Roget now entered a door, and beckoning Ernest to follow, he had scarcely appeared on its threshold before a piercing shriek proceeded from the poor invalid, who rushing towards him screamed with thrilling vehemence, ‘My brother, my brother!’ and then sank insensible at his feet.

“Overcome by surprise, Mdlle. Preville now remained for some time motionless, and Ernest’s mingled grief and amazement may be conceived when, on stooping to raise her from the ground, he recognised in the pallid lunatic his ideal model, the genius of his celebrity—the Eulalie of the Jardin des

Plantes. A gleam of delight flushed the poor girl's features as she again turned towards him. Passing one emaciated hand before her eyes, and then pressing both on her head, as if to repress the agitation that worked there, she exclaimed—

“ ‘Are you indeed returned, Arthur? and was all this but a frightful dream? Where is our mother? Oh! brother, I have been ill—very ill! My brain is still consuming by an internal fire—feel how it burns and throbs! But you won’t leave me now, brother—you will stay and talk of our own dear mother? Alas! she has quite forgotten me!’

“ A passionate burst of tears and sobs here interrupted her. Dr. Roget now whispered to Ernest that it would be expedient to encourage a delusion which might facilitate the accomplishment of their purpose. A very strong likeness between Ernest and Arthur Preville was very apparent to the physician.

“After some time the poor girl was told that her brother had been long absent; and now on his return hastened to visit her for the purpose of making Madame Preville a little portrait, for which Dr. Roget hoped she would give them an immediate sitting. With a trembling hand and tearful eye, Ernest commenced his work. Her presence was scarcely necessary for his execution of the picture; memory traced it, and he only paused to mark the sad changes which grief and disease had left upon her sharpened features. It is needless to record all the incidents of this scene, the wanderings of poor Eulalie, the mingled feelings of Ernest, and his subsequent interview with Madame Preville.

“‘Did she ask for me? Is my poor child suffering? Oh! how does she look?’ were questions often repeated by the loving mother. The sketch not being quite finished, Ernest promised to return in a few days for its completion.”

CHAPTER XIV.

“Who can paint
The young and shadowless spirit? Who can chain
The visible gladness of a heart that lives
Like a clear fountain in the eye of light,
With an unbreathing pencil?”

“EULALIE received young D’Arval with more composure at his second visit; the effect of their former interview had been most satisfactory, and Dr. Roget entreated him to return to Vincennes as often as his engagements would permit. After an interval of some days, yielding to the entreaty and example of her companion, Eulalie resumed a talent for drawing, which had formerly afforded her a constant source of amusement. Dr. Roget soon after proposed that Ernest’s services should receive some pecuniary requital, and as there was

no other means of becoming entitled to pay constant visits to Vincennes, he accepted the proffered engagement, to act henceforth as Mademoiselle Preville's preceptor in drawing. The change which occupation produced in Eulalie may be anticipated by those who are at all acquainted with the nature of mental aberration: it fixed her mind on a new object, and relieving it from all the conflicting ideas that had before confused her during perplexing reveries, recalled by degrees the old habits of her former life. Some months completed the cure.

“At length the day was fixed for an interview with Madame Preville, who had been long refused this favour, through the extreme circumspection of Dr. Roget; for relapses are always dreaded in cases of mental alienation. The care and improvement of months may be frustrated by too much reliance on a sudden amendment; for another patient's extravagances during

the more violent stages of insanity will be sufficient to recall similar paroxysms in the convalescent, and the chances of amendment materially diminish from their recurrence. Eulalie was soon aware of the delusion which occasioned her to mistake Ernest for her brother; she remembered too their meeting at the Jardin des Plantes. Another feeling had succeeded that of sisterly affection; enhanced by gratitude, and nurtured in solitude, its intensity baffles description. When informed that this young lover was the greatest artist of the day, whose works she had often contemplated with delight, her admiration enhanced his personal merits; if Ernest's was the passion of genius, it was reciprocated by the ardour of enthusiasm.

“Madame Preville, informed of this attachment, sanctioned their union with her warmest approval, and the day was fixed which would unite the loving mother to her daughter, while both counted every hour

till the interview. Ernest promised to convey Madame Preville to Vincennes, and never was happiness so ardently desired as that anticipated by the trio. Eulalie arose that morning with the sun, and it was not for her lover that she wore the neatest and most becoming dress: to appear unchanged by her recent malady was the object of this unusual care. Her own past sufferings might be forgotten, but the desolate home of her poor mother, the sorrow she had suffered, the privations she had endured, to secure Dr. Roget's care, when, from advanced age, the luxuries of life had become necessities, increased Eulalie's affection, always intense and expressive.

“ How to repay with loving care this sacrifice, how to beguile the tedium of age, and to alleviate its infirmities, seemed now to the grateful child a duty identified with life itself.

“ Such thoughts occupied our fair conva-

lescent, while seated at her window she breathlessly watched the road from Paris. At length the long looked-for vehicle appeared, and before the steps were half let down Eulalie's mother had been clasped to her heart.

“ Madame Preville gently disengaged herself from Eulalie's embrace, to contemplate that countenance which was the light of her own existence, as well as the record of her past happiness: as lovely as ever, for now her usual bloom had returned, Eulalie derived no satisfaction from her own glance of inquiry.

“ ‘ You are not well, dearest mother,’ she exclaimed; ‘ I see what sorrow has done during your poor child's absence. Oh, say that it is grief, and not illness, which has worked this change! Is it not so, sweet mother?’

“ ‘ Eulalie, my child, this meeting overcomes me; but I am well now, thank God, and supremely happy; kiss me again, my

darling. Eulalie, your cheek burns, and you do not breathe freely.'

" 'Tis the fever of happiness, my own mother, that oppresses me; I feel as if the grave restored me to you, rather than that the misfortunes of life had parted us.'

" Arrangements were now made for Eulalie's return home, and in a few days more she was established, with her mother and Ernest, at a pretty cottage a few miles from Paris. Upon further acquaintance, Madame Preville rejoiced in her child's choice, that made Ernest a second son, and in a few short weeks all former sorrow was temporarily forgotten. The misfortunes of the last year would, however, sometimes darken their thoughts, when memory recalled them, summoned by some painful association; for only those can be deemed truly happy for whom the present is not haunted by spectres of the past; those who can look back through a long vista at the path which they have pursued, and miss

none of those with whom they hitherto travelled it.

“The day was at length fixed for the completion of Ernest’s happiness, but before it arrived he was summoned to his mother at the village where she had for many years resided. She was seriously ill. Two days previous to that fixed for the wedding Ernest tore himself away from his betrothed; never before had he felt so miserable. The dread of arriving too late for his mother’s dying benediction had disturbed him all the previous night, and this suspense but ill prepared him for the sad parting from Eulalie; still, they were too young to fear the future, and although the pang might be acute, yet anticipations of a speedy reunion soothed it. How little did they foresee the result of that fatal separation!

“Madame Preville and her daughter were, during Ernest’s absence, to visit an old relation, and to return in ten days to their home. On the eleventh morning they would

proceed to Paris, there to meet the bridegroom at an apartment he promised to engage previous to his departure. The day wore heavily for Eulalie after her lover's lingering farewell. He was to write daily, and yet for the three mornings that intervened between that of their separation and the Thursday preceding her journey, no letter arrived ; it was in vain that Eulalie sat all day, long after the postman had passed, watching at her open window the arrival of some welcome messenger : none appeared. Their little excursion was fixed for Friday, and Mademoiselle Preville, unoccupied by any other subject than Ernest's absence, remained sorrowful and alone, brooding over his unexpected silence. To a healthy mind it would have appeared accidental ; but the young convalescent's sensibility was still unnaturally acute. Whether the seeds of former disease still lingered in her constitution, or some accidental complaint was spontaneously establishing itself there, cannot

be known; but restlessness and fever resulted from one or both of these causes. Madame Preville was now too busy with preparatory arrangements to notice this change; she left Eulalie much alone, imagining that leisure to think of Ernest would be to her sorrow its best consolation.

“A parching fever had for three nights disturbed this poor girl’s rest; on the Thursday evening these symptoms increased, while a thousand insensate fancies tormented her bewildered intellect: they all tended to one conclusion, that unless she sought Ernest he would never return to her. It were vain to record the fears, the suspicions, and the resolves that filled the hours intervening between the decision and its execution; poor Eulalie’s innocent scheme developed the cunning which usually accompanies insanity.

“The night was oppressively hot, and she appeared to wish for repose and quiet on Madame Preville’s return to their little

drawing-room, which opened on a garden facing the road.

“ The anxious mother spoke not a word to disturb Eulalie’s apparent rest, but sat near the open window, first enjoying the soothing effects of twilight, and then the refreshing cool of night; it was dark, and she could not see the change that had come over the face of her child, who lay on a sofa within the room. Madame Preville, silently engaged with mental pictures of their future happiness, often turned a mother’s gaze towards the form of her daughter, now barely distinguishable in the surrounding gloom. Eulalie soon after prepared to retire, and gently kissing her mother’s forehead, she withdrew to her room for the night; but the poor unfortunate was so much absorbed in fears for Ernest, and plans to rejoin him, that this salutation was not given with any extraordinary warmth.

“ ‘ Good night, my love,’ said Madame Preville; ‘ to-morrow at seven you shall be

called, that our journey may be accomplished before the heat of mid-day ; and I have particularly directed that our letters may be forwarded to Croix, Fontaine, immediately on their arrival, for to-morrow, I trust, you will receive one from Ernest.' Madame Preville closed the door of Eulalie's apartment, after again expressing a kind hope for her repose.

" The servants still continued their own preparations, of which the sounds would have been imperceptible to ears less watchful than Eulalie's ; but she awaited uninterrupted silence with morbid restlessness. Her soft and languid eye had changed its expression, and the resolution of fever now lighted it up, while the flush of unhealthy excitement glowed upon her cheek.

" When continued silence satisfied her that the moment for departure had arrived, she stole gently through the house, and accomplished her egress from the drawing-room window. The garden was rapidly traversed,

and its gate, opening to the road, as quickly unlocked, with a key brought from the hall. In a few minutes more Eulalie was walking with unnatural speed on her way to Paris, and during two successive hours she journeyed forward with equal swiftness.

“At sunrise the road was soon thronged by peasants proceeding to the markets of the metropolis; they sang merry songs, and with laughter and cheerful talk evinced the reviving effects of morning air on the animal spirits. Eulalie’s figure was so distinguished, even in a simple attire, that her appearance alone, and at that hour, surprised the passing villagers; they made respectful bows, and walked on, wondering what could induce so elegant and youthful a female to venture alone at that hour on the public highway. When within a mile of the barrier, Eulalie was accosted by a strange-looking woman, who had for some time followed her, and who observed her with a curiosity quite imperceptible to its object. Coarse,

large features, and a masculine gait, characterized this person, who carried an immense bundle under her arm, and looked like one of those itinerant vendors of faded finery, called in France *marchandes à la toilette*. The natural instinct of her sex had caused Eulalie to feel for some time abashed at her lonely situation; and although this new companion's appearance and manners were both unprepossessing in the extreme, still the poor girl returned the salutation with cordiality, from a vague wish for protection on her entrance into the busy metropolis. Her story was partly discovered by artful questions; and her interlocutor, pretending sympathy and proffering help, speedily elicited its completion. She readily perceived the state of Eulalie's intellect; a less experienced person might not immediately have detected it, but Madame le Brun had not lived for thirty years on the resources of her own ingenuity to be easily mistaken.

“ ‘Well, m’mselle,’ said she, after a short

pause, ‘and you have no idea where this M. Ernest is to be found ?’

“ ‘I have not,’ replied Eulalie, her eyes filling with tears; ‘I remember the address of his former lodging, but that he quitted when we all went to reside at my mother’s cottage.’

“ ‘Don’t cry, m’mselle,’ exclaimed Madame le Brun ; ‘if he is to be found in Paris I will bring him to you this very day. You must come to my lodging, Rue du Chien Blanc, and when you are comfortably settled there I will leave you for a couple of hours, and at my return you shall have good tidings of this inconstant.’

“ Madame le Brun here stopped to pick up Eulalie’s purse, which fell to the ground when she drew a handkerchief from the reticule that contained both. It was filled with the little hoard which Madame Preville destined to the purchase of a wedding trousseau for her child, and would have been thus applied at their return to Paris,

but the artful adventuress now doomed it to another use, while ostentatiously restoring the little treasure to its owner. They then toiled on through the barrier, and upon entering the narrow streets leading to her own obscure quarter, Madame le Brun congratulated Eulalie on the shade they afforded, for although early the sun's rays were hourly becoming more scorching. The mercantile world alone seemed abroad. Many spruce young men, proceeding to their different posts, paused to admire Eulalie as she hurried along with her questionable guide. Perfectly unconscious of their notice, the poor girl silently walked beside Madame le Brun, who, with the ascendancy of a determined spirit, soon awed Eulalie into implicit obedience to all her commands. They entered into and emerged from many narrow lanes, ere the promised dwelling appeared. It stood within a gloomy, dilapidated court, and not before ascending five flights of dirty narrow stairs did Madame

le Brun stop before a door, through which she admitted Eulalie into her miserable apartment. It was dirty and untidy to a very offensive degree, and to Mademoiselle Preville's delicate sense of cleanliness such a scene would at another time have been truly disgusting. Now she was insensible to all its varied disagreeables, while urging Madame le Brun to the accomplishment of her promise, and repeating the same entreaty every five minutes till her hostess departed.

“‘Sit down, my dear, and take some breakfast; when I have done mine, your business shall be my first concern.’

“Eulalie declined all nourishment, but promised faithfully not to leave the house till Madame’s return.

“‘By the bye,’ said the latter, ‘you had better lend me your purse, m’m’selle; it will be safer in my keeping than in yours; and as after this morning’s fatigue I am too tired for walking, you must furnish me with a conveyance to execute this commission.’

“ ‘Take it all; do with it what you like,’ replied Eulalie, ‘if you but proceed at once in quest of Ernest. Oh, do allow me to accompany you!’

“ ‘If you go, m’mselle, I stay; take your choice.’ And the poor girl, silenced by this alternative, seated herself in calm submission on a decrepit chair, while Madame le Brun, having finished her household arrangements, descended the narrow staircase with provoking composure.

“ Left in solitude, poor Eulalie’s mind wandered uncontrolled through a labyrinth of grievances and perplexities, till at last she fancied that Ernest had breathed his last sigh away from her, his dying words falling on other ears than those for which they were uttered. A passion of tears was provoked by this thought. Then he had deserted her for a rival, and affected indifference or assumed scorn was enacted to mask the agonies of her offended pride.

“ Hours passed on, and Eulalie still re-

mained the solitary occupant of that miserable and dirty garret—now pacing up and down its length, then seated in listless despondency, or watching with painful suspense; no position was retained for any length of time. The sun shone with his mid-day brightness and heat on the roof of her resting-place, and two hours succeeded, while Eulalie still expected her long-absent messenger. At last a gentle knock seemed to beat upon her heart, and summoned her to the door, which she expected to open upon her long-wished-for hostess. But still Eulalie was disappointed, for a young man, your acquaintance, Charles Breton, stood where she hoped to see the welcome person of Madame le Brun.

“ ‘I am sure you will pardon the intrusion, mademoiselle,’ said he, ‘in favour of my motive for disturbing you; as if I mistake not, you may ever feel grateful for this unceremonious proceeding.’

“ Eulalie made no acknowledgment of this

speech, but stared at the stranger in confused suspense. He continued—

“ ‘ This morning, on my return from an early walk, I saw you enter here with Madame le Brun, and from the superiority of your appearance to that of her usual associates, I suspect that this woman has by some wicked stratagem inveigled you to her lodging. My rooms are opposite, and circumstances which I lately observed have induced me to suspect this person of conduct from the effects of which I would willingly rescue you, and of which I should have warned you sooner, had not an engagement summoned me to another part of the town on urgent business, which I believed would only have detained me but for a few minutes, instead of the time that I have been forced to let elapse since then. If my suspicions are just, for Heaven’s sake do not remain here one instant longer; fly hence as you would hasten from a pest-house; for the very atmosphere is impregnated with infamy.’ ”

“A new light seemed to break on Eulalie’s intellect; the depressing languor of previous disappointment now yielded to a lively perception of the young man’s meaning.

“‘Let me go—let me go!’ she gasped; and pushing him away from the door, she rushed past to the stairs.

“‘Yet one moment, mademoiselle,’ exclaimed Charles Breton, as he detained her on the first flight, which she had nearly descended at one bound. ‘Where will you go? I must accompany you to your home. But stop; we cannot be seen together by Madame le Brun’s neighbours. Leave the house alone, and as quickly as possible; and wait for me at the end of the next street, to the left; I will follow immediately, and then you shall tell me where I may restore you to your friends.’

“Eulalie, before these words were half finished, had reached the ground-floor, and was in the street the next minute. The

shock of this last blow completely upset her reasoning faculties, which during the preceding attack were only impaired on the subject of Ernest's absence. Still no external evidence of this change appeared.

“Unlike the daring vehemence which insanity provokes in the stronger sex, the delusion of a female's mind mostly assumes a milder and more amenable character, and our poor lunatic, with instinctive diffidence, seemed even painfully to restrain the feelings that excited her. Hurrying on, she knew not whither, but accidentally taking the direction recommended by her new acquaintance, she was soon overtaken, and placing her arm within his, Charles continued to walk on for a few minutes in silence. Perhaps he wished to afford his terrified companion time to recover from her late emotion, for not until some minutes had elapsed did he again address her.

“‘Where can I conduct you, or how shall I serve you?’ were his first inquiries.

“Eulalie did not reply; a vacant stare alone succeeded his query. Again the young man questioned her, and still the large blue eyes gazed on his in utter unconsciousness, while some incoherent words, rapidly uttered, fully betrayed the nature of her silence.

“‘Poor creature!’ he exclaimed; ‘the horror that my communication occasioned her has no doubt deranged her intellects. So young and beautiful! even such a misfortune is preferable to that from which I may have rescued her.’

“A joyous laugh here interrupted him, for Eulalie had perceived a bridal-wreath of orange-flowers in a window, and stopping to find her purse, its absence from her reticule now first struck her.

“‘I cannot purchase it,’ she said, pitifully; ‘and yet I am to be married on Monday, for he returns that morning. The old woman took all my money!’ And then she wept with childlike petulance.

“Charles drew her gently from the shop, and after walking on for some time in silence, he hurried their steps as if a sudden thought now directed them.

“‘I am taking you to my sister’s,’ said he; ‘you can remain with her till I learn from whence Madame le Brun enticed you to her infamous den.’

“Eulalie understood little of this; she caught up detached words, and on these formed ideas foreign to the subject, or else talked of Ernest, and declared that he never would acknowledge the visitor of Madame le Brun. Upon reaching an artificial-flower shop, Charles Breton whispered a few words to a young person behind the counter, and kindly promising Eulalie soon to return, he left her under the protection of his sister Clara, the owner of the business. Eulalie, prevailed on to repose, consented to throw herself upon a bed; but sleep would not subdue her to her excited senses.

“Charles Breton was awaiting her rea-

pearance in his sister's little parlour, where, a few minutes later, his physician was introduced to Eulalie. The doctor's opinion was unfavourable; he recommended extreme quiet, and the continuance of Breton's search for Eulalie's friends. Did he fail in discovering them, the patient's removal to a neighbouring asylum was recommended.

“ ‘Can she not remain here, my dear sir?’ exclaimed Breton. ‘We are poor; but my industry shall be redoubled if it but afford the comforts of private care to this poor creature, for the interest I feel in her recovery is quite unaccountable; and although we never met before to-day, still that face appears to me not like a stranger's.’

“ ‘She resembles some one whom you have known,’ replied Dr. Albert; ‘for her style of beauty is so remarkable that once admired it could never be forgotten.’

“ Breton's proffered fee was quietly rejected by the worthy physician. Pressing his young friend's hand with affectionate

warmth, Dr. Albert departed. Breton soon followed, to accuse Madame le Brun before the authorities of having robbed and deceived a young female. He hoped thus to obtain through the mischievous old woman some clue to Eulalie's friends. Mademoiselle Breton now tried to soothe her brother's *protégée*. She sat quietly beside her in the little parlour, leaving the shop in care of an assistant, and endeavouring to amuse her by displaying the little novelties of the last fashion. She exhibited a *corbeille de mariage*, prepared for a wedding to be celebrated the succeeding week. The white satin basket was cautiously removed from its many coverings, while, with the pride of having made some of the contents herself, they were displayed carefully and with taste by the young woman. The bridal wreath alone attracted Eulalie's attention; to please her, Mademoiselle Breton placed it on her glossy dark hair, adding the veil which fell in light folds around her tall

and graceful figure; she childishly enjoyed the effect of this finery in a glass placed for the purpose before her, and Mademoiselle Breton thought that one so lovely had never yet embellished the bridal attire. Poor Eulalie, that wreath was yours! and that veil fulfilled its destiny by falling round the form for which it was intended; the *corbeille* still contained a box ornamented with your name, and within it a miniature of Ernest, painted by his friend Charles, as an offering to the happy bride. Charles Breton, as you know, was the young artist who accompanied Ernest to Vincennes, and his sister had been intrusted with the selection of these bridal presents.

“Some one requiring her presence in the shop, Mademoiselle Breton hastily arranged the *corbeille*, and restored it to its covers, while Eulalie sat quietly occupied with her own thoughts for the remainder of the evening. Mademoiselle Breton hoped that the fatigues of the day had disposed her to

sleep, and recommending the indulgence of so favourable a symptom, she at length prevailed on her guest to retire for the night. Towards ten o'clock Charles returned with the information that Madame le Brun had taken flight on the discovery of Eulalie's escape, and was nowhere to be found. Discouraged and fatigued, he sat long at their frugal meal, devising plans for the woman's detection, and the discovery of Eulalie's relatives. This poor girl had awakened a new interest in the young artist's mind; her gentleness, her beauty, and, above all, her dependence on his exertions, enhanced this feeling.

“‘She will certainly recover, Clara,’ said he; ‘this delirium is only the result of sudden terror, and it must yield to skilful treatment. I will write to Ernest D’Arval to-morrow, and on his return to Paris even the wedding preparatives will not, I am sure, prevent his participation in my efforts to restore this poor creature to her

friends. We cannot indulge in our little extra expenditure for some time, dear sister, for to-morrow the best professional advice in Paris must be engaged, and this, with the hire of an experienced attendant, will exhaust our little savings of the past two years. Should she never recover, or really have bestowed her affections on another, then the approval of a good conscience must be my reward for the anxiety I feel on her account. Adieu, dear Clara; take care of our poor sufferer,' and embracing his sister, this worthy young man departed to his lodgings in the Rue du Chien Blanc.

“Mademoiselle Breton now prepared to retire for the night, and after removing the remains of their little supper, she cautiously ascended a small staircase leading to the room where Eulalie reposed, intercepting with her hand the rays that might disturb the sleeper; then placing the candle in a remote corner of the apartment, she

gently stole towards the bed to assure herself that her guest slept. Nothing seemed displaced, and at first she fancied that the little bed contained its looked-for occupant, but upon a nearer approach she saw that Eulalie was gone!"

CHAPTER XV.

“ Who that has cull’d a weeping rose
Will ask it why it breathes and glows,
Unmindful of the blushing ray
In which it shines its soul away—
Unmindful of the scented sigh
On which it dies and loves to die ? ”

“ MADAME PREVILLE, the morning succeeding Eulalie’s departure, arose early to complete some arrangements for their journey; it was her daughter’s birthday, and the little presents and surprises, prepared for the occasion, she laid beside her, intending to place them so that Eulalie should see her pretty offerings on first awaking. For this purpose she stole to her room—it was deserted, and the unfortunate mother rushed forth to inquire of the servants, and then of the neighbours, if they knew any-

thing of her child. The house, the garden were searched fruitlessly, and after two hours spent in unavailing efforts to trace her, Madame Preville proceeded to Paris on foot and alone, for she would not wait till a conveyance could be procured.

“ The conviction that Eulalie’s malady had reappeared was now too certain; she would never have left me else, thought the poor woman, while with hurried steps and eager gaze she passed through the brilliant and busy streets of the metropolis, never pausing till every place that Eulalie had usually frequented was in turn visited. This unusual exertion and disappointment reduced her, after a few hours, to a state nearly as helpless as that of her child. In the bewilderment of her sudden misfortune, she neglected employing means that would have occurred to her under other circumstances neither did she look for assistance from her friends, but, fevered and incoherent, she walked wildly from street to street, follow-

ing those whose figures resembled Eulalie's, and questioning others as she passed the light-hearted throng, who ascribed to insanity that strange address and haggard countenance.

“ Towards ten o'clock the rain showered its torrents along the busy street; soon arresting the gay procession returning from their evening enjoyment on the Boulevards. A few carriages bearing well-sheltered occupants along the now gloomy thoroughfares alone interrupted the silence of one through which Madame Preville walked wearily. Although not perceiving the rain, its force interrupted her progress, and almost mechanically she hastily entered the porch of a private hotel for shelter. A beggar woman sat on the low stone seat opposite that on which she sank, caressing her little infant, whose neat clothing contrasted strongly with the tatters of its pale and emaciated mother. The little girl sat on her knee, while she fed it with a dry crust,

refusing the morsels which the child in play approached occasionally to her own colourless lips.

“‘It is all I have, darling,’ said she, ‘and little enough for you.’

“The first tear which quenched the burning cheek of Madame Preville that day now fell on it when she thought—‘That would I do for my Eulalie. Oh! how willingly would I suffer the poverty, and hunger, and disease afflicting this poor creature, if, like her, I might caress my child, my gentle child, again.’

“She crossed the street, regardless of the pouring rain, and purchasing a roll opposite, brought it to the beggar. The poor woman thanked her, and hastily breaking the bread, gave the first morsel to her little child. ‘That, too, would I do for my Eulalie,’ said Madame Preville, as she put a franc into the young mother’s hand, and turned hastily from the door to continue her fruitless pursuit.

“ We must now return to Ernest, who, on the day of his departure from Madame Preville’s, engaged a small apartment in Paris for his friends, and then proceeded to make preparations for the approaching wedding. His purchases were chosen with unerring taste. A few classical ornaments, some flowers, two shawls, with materials of the colours best suited to Eulalie’s complexion, completed them ; the bridal wreath and bouquet he placed himself in the *corbeille*, with a simple veil of the clearest lace. When this little arrangement was completed, he addressed to Eulalie a letter full of tenderness and regret ; it was his last occupation in Paris, and confided to a friend who promised to deposit it safely in the post next morning. This person either forgot or mislaid his precious charge, and the note never reached its destination ; and, consequently, a request that Madame Preville would send in future to the newly-

engaged apartment in Paris for subsequent letters, to save a day's delay, was fruitless.

“On the second evening after his departure Ernest reached the village inhabited by his mother. How the occurrences of his past life crowded to his memory on revisiting the scenes of early childhood, the past sorrow and the future hope all merging in the present thought, that the kind being who had averted his evil fortunes and sacrificed herself to his better destiny would not now survive to share the happiness which she had secured for others. Along that walk had she led his infant steps, and often under that tree was his mind impressed with early lessons of virtue. Here stood the cottages amongst whose necessitous inhabitants his heart awakened to the enjoyments of benevolence by a mother's example; and there she had once awaited his return home, until the chill of a wintry wind brought pains to her delicate limbs, which were never since subdued. And

now, thought Ernest, I shall see her for the last time!

“On entering his mother’s house he was met by the nurse who took care of her, and who now declared, to his great joy, that all danger was happily passed. He found Madame D’Arval weak and emaciated, but free from pain, and so revived at seeing him, that in a week after his return she was entirely convalescent.

“For eight days, but one letter from Eulalie reached him; it was written immediately after their separation: since then Madame Preville addressed him once, and after a few lines pleaded business as her excuse for an abrupt epistle. This letter the poor woman penned after Eulalie’s disappearance, and in it she wished to account for their future silence, determining not to aggravate Ernest’s distress at his mother’s danger by communicating this new misfortune. ‘He will hear it too soon,’ said she; ‘and the fruitlessness of

my search hitherto promises but little comfort to either of us in this world. If aware of Eulalie's flight, he would naturally write to me immediately.'

"It was with extreme surprise that Ernest heard how no application since his departure was made by the Previlles in the Rue Belford, at the new lodging, where letters remained still unclaimed. Rendered very anxious by this circumstance, he determined to consult his friend Charles Breton ere the day closed, and calling at the studio towards evening, he there resolved on proceeding the next morning to Madame Preville's villa. 'She may not be returned,' said he to Charles, 'but at least I shall hear when to expect her, and it is a pleasure to revisit the dwelling of Eulalie, to look at the drawings which she executed, and to admire the flowers that she planted. Charles, you shall accompany me, for never having seen the real Psyche, you cannot judge if my anticipated portraits

are correct, or if I ever yet succeeded in depicting her very extraordinary beauty.' Charles declined this offer of his friend. Still in pursuit of the poor fugitive, his search could not be remitted, but telling his story to Ernest, he described the anguish, the fatigue, the disappointment which he had endured in the pursuit hitherto so unavailing.

"' Ernest, if you could but see her, my infatuation would not appear extraordinary, for although her loveliness at first seemed familiar to me, still, until yesterday a resemblance to your Psyche did not strike me as the cause of this association; pardon me when I assure you that she is even more beautiful than the subject of your splendid picture.'

" Charles interested Ernest so much in the fate of the poor fugitive that he consented to visit betimes next morning the only hospital that had not yet been searched, in the hope of still discovering her. The

not there: that pale and wax-like face, retaining still the soft contour of youth, rested uneasily upon the pillow; she was fair and lovely, but not her own lost child.

“ ‘Poor thing! your mother’s arm should pillow that sweet head; she knows not, perhaps, of your sad fate,’ and Madame Previle turned to the bed from which in disappointment she had just before averted her eager eyes. ‘Poor child! you are as lovely and perhaps as good as my own Eulalie; may God relieve you, and may your mother’s heart suffer less than mine.’ Arranging the dying girl’s pillow, and touching softly her cold, white hand, Madame Previle said, ‘Watch her, good sister; promise me that you will not leave her till all is over; a parent’s blessing shall requite your kindness. My child is not here; I must now seek her at the Ste. Marie. Adieu, good sister; God will reward your charity.’

“ Madame Previle left the hospital with a

heavy heart, and, accompanied by her kind friend, proceeded to Ste. Marie, where it was soon ascertained that Eulalie had been admitted the preceding night; for in a lucid interval she communicated her name, which, with the description of her malady, was inserted in the books of the hospital. ‘I conducted the poor woman to her child’s bed,’ said a sister of charity, a tear starting to her eye at the recollection, ‘I led her to where the poor dying girl lay quite delirious, and unconscious of her parent’s presence, who for some time sat with a vacant stare, fixing her rayless eyes on the attenuated face of her child.’ The poor mother’s energies were so painfully exhausted that grief now entirely expended them, although no persuasion could induce her to take repose or nourishment. ‘My child cannot enjoy either,’ she said, ‘and I may better resist the privation; while she lives these eyes shall see and these ears hear nothing but her.’ It was vain to urge the unfortu-

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nate mother, as she sat listening to Eulalie's moans, and watching for a gleam of reason through the mists of her obscured mind.

"One evening she said to the nurse, in a whisper—'My child never speaks of me; I watch and pray for a word of remembrance, but no—God help me! she never once has even named her "poor mother."

"An hour afterwards Eulalie cried—'Ernest, Ernest!' Of him she raved incessantly; then, seeming to remember his absence, she continued, 'Oh, no, he is not here, and they have left me nothing that he gave me—they took his letters—but—yes—I have this still,' and her poor, emaciated hand sought for something in the folds of her night-dress, from whence she drew a small golden locket containing her mother's hair with some of Ernest's, and kissing it repeatedly, continued, looking fixedly at one side of the medallion, 'Stay—what is this? my Ernest's hair is black! and this—this is not dark, but fair and

grey, oh, yes; this is my dear, sweet mother's own silvered hair.' From the moment Eulalie sought the locket, Madame Preville had watched her with a look such as cannot be described, while she crouched gradually beside the bed, with her hands clasped and her eyes immovably fixed on Eulalie as if condensing all her feelings into the one desire that her name should at last pass those beloved lips; and when Eulalie uttered the wished-for sound the poor mother, overcome by joy, sank with a convulsive cry beside her child.

"Madame Preville rallied. Eulalie had not noticed her, but covered her face with the bed-clothes, and sobbing, exclaimed, in broken sentences—'My mother, why did I leave her? even for him—she was so good, so gentle, and so kind. Oh, wretch that I am, to desert my own sweet mother, and——' 'My child, my life, my darling,' cried Madame Preville, 'look at me, speak to me! touch me, Eulalie! Oh, 'tis I; it

is your own old mother that——’ and she could add no more, for Eulalie, throwing both arms convulsively around her neck, and clasping her to her heart, held her there with an impassioned grasp. When this sudden burst of feeling had subsided, taking her mother’s hand, she said, ‘I know I left you, dearest mother, under the influence of fever—madness—do not tell him—oh, never let him know how I have abandoned you—he must love his Eulalie even in her cold and quiet grave.’

“‘ Do not talk thus, sweetest; you will see him yourself when we are happy again,’ said Madame Previle.

“‘ No, no,’ replied Eulalie, ‘ I feel that I shall never see him more; I knew that we parted for ever then. Give him this, mother,’ and she placed the little locket in her mother’s hand; but withdrawing it again, she added, ‘ No, I will wear it till—till—I can think of him no more;’ and she strove with her wan, feeble hands to

replace the little token round her neck. Madame Preville arranged it as she desired. ‘And now,’ said Eulalie, ‘mother dear, we will pray—we will pray for you and for him—first stoop to kiss me. I am weak, very weak. Good sister, comfort her *then*, and pray also with us now.’ Eulalie prayed, and her mother never left her for a moment afterwards till her soul departed, while yet the words of faith and love moved her trembling lips, as if the prayer which she was uttering would be finished in another sphere.

“At the appointed hour Charles and Ernest met, and in a cabriolet proceeded towards the remote asylum, situated at an extremity of the town. ‘How different is my fate from that of Charles,’ thought Ernest, as they drove silently along the external Boulevard. ‘The object of his irrationally sudden affection is an unknown fugitive, perhaps an outcast from her

father's home, while this vain pursuit wastes time, which to him is life, for its employment merely secures the means of a precarious existence. But have I not energy to help him? Shall unbounded generosity reduce him to a dilemma which I so coolly anticipated?" and a resolve in the negative dimmed Ernest's eye as he silently pressed the hand of his young companion. Charles understood this mute testimony of sympathy, and returning it affectionately, he exclaimed—

" 'Ernest, you pity and yet condemn my imprudence. I should be entirely excused did you but for one moment experience what I feel.'

"The hospital gate opened to receive them, and both were ushered into a room near the entrance, where Charles left his friend for a few minutes, and then returned pallid and trembling. 'It is all over,' he exclaimed; 'last night my poor sufferer expired here, where she was brought on being found

wandering in the streets soon after having left my sister's house; her tender frame could not withstand the exposure and fatigues of that day, of which a brain fever was the result. Come, Ernest, and see the shadow of what she was; her poor remains were just now removed to a room near the public ward in which she expired.' Ernest followed Charles to where a body lay upon a bed, covered by a white cloth. It was gently lifted from the face—and Ernest beheld his Eulalie!

"No groan, no sigh betrayed the appalling recognition, and when Charles, absorbed in his own grief, had fixed his steadfast gaze upon the attenuated form of Eulalie, unmindful of all else, and at last turned to look for sympathy in the countenance of Ernest, his eyes met the unconscious stare and his ears heard the incoherent words of idiocy!

Ernest D'Arval had lost his reason.

"Another face as pale as his was there now beside them, for Madame Previle

had just crept into the room slowly and noiselessly, and stood near the corpse, with tearless, anxious eyes, looking first at her child and then at Ernest, as if her senses were dead to all impressions but one.

“The poor mother was removed with Ernest to a lodging near the hospital, and the next day, accompanied by Charles Breton, followed her child to the grave. Her sorrow was quiet and silent, but it soon stopped the course of her feeble life, which lingered on a little while and then subsided into death, with the silent, painless, gradual depression that so soon reunites the mourner to the mourned, when the poor, struggling heart, too full of love and sorrow, breaks. Gentle and docile, Ernest was sent to his uncle in Italy, where he caused no disturbance in the little household, but remained there, as you have seen, a living monument of his expended race, reminding Monsieur Villabella of its beauty, still further represented by the unusual loveliness of Leonora.”

Agnes had listened breathlessly to the story of Ernest's misfortunes, and wept at poor Eulalie's melancholy death.

To do Sir Harry Ashworth justice, he seemed pleased that she felt it, and he was gratified at having made a friend for Leonora, who might be of use to her as an adviser and patron. Although like Madame D'Albremont in many particulars, the baronet was far less calculating, for a vein of good-nature ran through his character which a worldly life had not quite exhausted, so that where personal interest was not prejudiced by being kind, he could occasionally serve a friend. He was, besides, much too pleasure-loving to embarrass himself with the trouble necessary for carrying out such schemes as his sister plotted and executed. A suddenly projected and as suddenly enacted interference in Agnes's concerns succeeded better than he expected; when they had been actively forwarded by

Madame D'Albremont, whom he consulted at the time, and again now, she directed him how to act in Annesley's affairs so as to prolong the detention in prison of a dangerous rival.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ With burnish’d brand and musketoon
So gallantly you come,
I read you for a bold dragoon,
That lists the tuck o’ drum.”

SIR HARRY’s efforts to ingratiate himself with the fair Agnes were materially counteracted by the reports she heard of M. de Belleville’s conduct, which depressed her constantly till she was little inclined to be amused by the baronet’s gaiety. From others she learnt how immediately after the marriage her amiable uncle-in-law had behaved most cruelly to his wife. Agnes in vain tried to see the poor old woman, whom the captain soon carried off to the country, and deposited Agnes did not know where. She feared that he would now squander or appropriate all the ready money which

Mrs. de Belleville possessed, and then, by coercion, secure the entire control over her jointure. Sir Harry met him at public places—his moustaches curled with extra care, and his equipment altogether very materially improved by recent prosperity. He was always in attendance upon a moderately handsome Italian, whose husband, with that friendship for his wife's lover which is a known dispensation of nature, seemed as much charmed as the lady with the veteran coxcomb, who declared that an old aunt had adopted him, and devoted her entire fortune to his expenditure, thus securing the civilities of daughters as well as the attention of mothers, looking into the distant perspective of reversionary matrimony. To his personal charms he trusted for enslaving married women.

It was but too true that Mrs. de Belleville had been put out of sight very shortly after her unfortunate marriage; for taking the hint from the project for her seclusion

which he had defeated, the captain placed her in a rural boarding-house. It was situated near a small town a few leagues from Châlons, where, under the pretext of showing her his family place, he conveyed her, to be received, he said, by a paternal cousin, with whom he begged her to spend a month, while he went to prepare a grand château in the South of France for their reception.

On the journey he made her swear most solemnly that she was to allow herself to be called Jones, and to pass for his great-aunt, the sister of his grandmother, who he said was an Englishwoman. On no account should her new associates be further informed of their history or affairs.

By this time the poor old creature was so terrified at his frown, and so amenable to his rule, that she would have agreed to whatever he proposed, particularly as his commands were often enforced by manual persuasion.

M. Doyen, the proprietor of the establish-

ment, received her with great civility; and when at dinner she joined a large party of extraordinary-looking people, Belleville assured her that they were all his relations, who lived together, as is usual in France, for the sake of economy. She dared not hint to him that they seemed a very strange set; but she thought it. Amongst them were included two lame men and one blind woman, while a fat body rolled about in a chair, had a child with a very enormous head, and a deaf and dumb wife. She tried in her own mind to settle the relationship between the parties, and, after having done so, decided that there never was seen so ill-favoured a family.

On perceiving that all of them looked at her suspiciously—for Belleville had informed M. Doyen that his aunt was mostly imbecile, and sometimes dangerous, so that she should be kept at a respectful distance—she felt convinced that her husband's family did not at all approve of her domestication

amongst them. It was impossible to propitiate them by conversation, for when they spoke to her she always used the only four French words which she remembered—these were “*Comment vous portez-vous?*” no doubt a very appropriate question amongst so many invalids.

Belleville departed the morning subsequent to his arrival, promising to return at the end of the week; but, of course, never reappearing, being engaged at Paris in trying to retrieve some recent serious losses at the gaming-table. After the expiration of three weeks, Mrs. de Belleville’s patience began to fail; she had received no letters from Agnes in return for two written but not forwarded to Miss Somerton, for M. Doyen was desired by M. de Belleville to keep all her correspondence till his return. The former gentleman began also to grow very uneasy about the acquittal of the English lady’s account, for credit is a phase of commerce little practised in France, and M.

Doyen required very ready payments from his lodgers, so poor Mrs. de Belleville was now snubbed by the dissatisfied host, whose inmates entered into his feelings of contempt for the stupid deaf old lady. She was moved into a very inferior room, without a fire-place, and with a miserable bed, where the rain often poured in through an old roof, obliging her, during bad weather, to sleep under her umbrella.

It was evident that M. Doyen wanted to get rid of his English guest, and the supposed happy family appeared to concur in this desire. Harassed and provoked by such recognisable unkindness, the old lady resolved on making her escape from it, and proceeding to Paris to find protection and redress under Agnes's roof. She was made so uncomfortable that now to avoid her very disagreeable associates, who began latterly to amuse themselves at her expense, she would have gone anywhere.

A country conveyance to the next town

passed the house daily, and Mrs. de Belleville determined on availing herself of this machine at the first opportunity. One fine morning, when most of her associates were out walking, she managed to be ready at the gate terminating a path which led through a plantation near the house, and nodding to the driver, when he asked her if she wished to proceed to Alton, he opened the carriage and deposited her within it—the only passenger.

The Count had taken care to leave only a few francs in her possession, so that had this circumstance occurred to her, she never might have attempted the journey; but almost beside her self, bewildered by the irritating behaviour of her supposed family, no forethought checked her.

After an hour's severe jolting in the rickety vehicle, she was set down in a court-yard surrounded by stables, where the whole sum in her possession was required by the extortionate driver. There was no house near,

and Mrs. de Belleville, on getting out of the carriage, walked along a narrow street which led to a small market-place, the centre of this little town. There she saw “ Hotel” written in large letters over the door of a dirty house, and entering it, she addressed the host in English, after exhausting her “ Comment vous portez-vous?” in French. He showed her with many bows and smiles into a bedroom, and observing her pantomimic signs of eating and drinking, supplied her with a miserable meal.

At night she slept in a wretched bed, even dirtier and more uncomfortable than that which she had recently occupied, and when the host handed in his bill for these luxuries, and made his signals for money, the next day, there was, of course, none forthcoming. After a long harangue from him and many shrieked questions from his wife, which were naturally unintelligible to their object, Mrs. de Belleville wrote a note in English to M. Doyen, re-

questing that he would at once forward her boxes.

She knew his direction, and the inn-keeper being acquainted with the establishment, inclosed the letter in one from himself, inquiring if the English lady who had lately left the boarding-house was a person to be trusted. M. Doyen soon after sent an answer, stating that Mrs. de Belleville's board and lodging for a month were still due to him, and that on no account would he give up her trunks till his account was discharged. The innkeeper, now very much annoyed at this information, immediately proceeded to Mrs. de Belleville's room, where his wife and the servants followed, to stand outside, and hear the result of his interview with the deaf queer old lady.

All he could extort from his very unwelcome visitor was "Comment vous portez-vous?" and "Oui, mossu," in answer to sundry questions and invectives, which he

began courteously with a civil request, as if she could understand it, that the bill in his hand might be discharged. “I am sorry to trouble Madame, but if Madame will give me another reference, I will continue to serve her till she receives remittances from her friends.”

“Oui, mossu! Comment vous portez-vous?”

“Will you give me the address, if you please? To whom shall I apply?”

“Oui, mossu.”

“If not, be kind enough to pay my bill.”

“Oui, mossu.”

“I am very much obliged to you,” said the landlord, delighted at this assent; “the amount, you see, is small; we are very moderate at the Lion d’Or.”

“Oui, mossu.”

“I have applied to M. Doyen, who declares that you are indebted to him.”

“Oui, mossu.”

“As you won’t pay your bill, and

your referee disclaims all knowledge of your pecuniary means, I must request you to leave my house!" Here the landlord got into a towering passion, and when Mrs. de Belleville wrote on the back of his account Agnes' direction and handed it to him, he would not deign to accept it, but continued at the top of his voice, "This won't do, old lady; I am not going to give you a day and night's keep till we receive the same answer from this person that M. Doyen sent me."

Mrs. de Belleville now put up her hands imploringly and uttered three *oui-ouis*, by way of entreaty.

"Your *oui-ouis* won't do any longer here, my good woman; I see quite well what you are at: you know French, I dare-say, as well as I do, and go on with this nonsense of '*oui, oui,*' and '*comment vous portez-vous,*' to evade the questions which you cannot answer. Don't pretend to be a fool with me, but take *oui, oui* somewhere

else. Diantre ! I won't stand it any longer."

At the conclusion of this crescendo, the landlady and party entering the room, she in a very treble voice screeched out her opinions, seconded by the chambermaid, the dirty waiter supporting them with a running bass, accompanied by the ostler's whistle, while two curs, with French canine excitability, barked at the noise, and frightened Mrs. de Belleville, who hated dogs, nearly into fits. She ran screeching lustily into a corner, from whence the landlord, believing this to be another scheme for remaining in his house, dragged her forth, and giving her a hearty shake, sent her out into the street, where the dogs followed. Imagining that it was their duty to see her well out of the neighbourhood, they chased her for a while, tore her shawl, and then returned triumphantly with their tails in the air, no doubt very proud of the ejection which they had so ably effected.

No one could speak English in the town; thirty years ago it was an unknown tongue to the country districts of France; but as the story of Madame de Belleville's adventure at the inn was circulated throughout the place, the neighbours, considering her a clever swindler, hooted when she passed their doors, while the children ran after "*la bête Anglaise*" with compliments which it was fortunate she could neither understand nor hear. From the disturbance caused by these proceedings, the authorities, appealed to by the innkeeper after a very talking meeting, decided on placing Mrs. de Belleville in the only public asylum which the place afforded, combining the purposes of a foundling hospital and a lying-in institution.

No other retreat could have been less agreeable to Mrs. de Belleville, for babies were unclean animals in her estimation, and she disliked them even more than dogs, so that her embarrassment was great when surrounded by these products of an active

population. She even fancied that they were collected there to torment her. Some had heads hanging on, she believed, by a thread ; others, of larger growth, were more consolidated into bone, or expanded into red gelatine, all of a material that had never been varied since its origin by the application of water. With the natural supposition that Mrs. de Belleville possessed that innate and beautiful feminine tenderness inspired by the maternal instinct, small living bundles of incipient infancy were constantly placed in her hands, and larger lumps thrust upon her capacious lap ; but after holding them all at arm's length, and dropping one or two, the mothers and nurses agreed that she was a stupid old drone, unfit to be trusted with such precious breakables as babies, and a murmur spread amongst them as to her being a man in disguise and a very improper inmate for the institution.

At this juncture a letter arrived from

Agnes, in answer to one which Mrs. de Belleville had forwarded to her the day but one before, and which had reached its destination now that all communications were no longer intercepted as heretofore by Belleville's orders. Agnes arrived the same night, to find her miserable aunt in a most pitiable condition, covered with rags and dirt, and so entirely bewildered by all her adventures that she could only give a rambling account of them; and from having seen so much of maternity lately, actually assuring her niece that she was herself shortly about to become a mother! Agnes proceeded with the poor old lady at once to Paris; and, after obtaining good medical advice, carefully watched her until the vigour of her mind and body were restored to their usual standard.

The lawyers who had been instructed to secure the property which Belleville tried to appropriate, were successful in their proceedings, for the laws of France—much

more favourable to females than our own —protected the greater part of Mrs. de Belleville's fortune from the rapacity of her husband. Thus benefited, the poor old woman remained with her niece, a living proof of Agnes's kindly and forgiving temper.

It was not alone taxed with Mrs. de Belleville's absurdities, for Sir Harry Ashworth now made constant pretexts of messages from his sister to call every day in the Rue de Rivoli, where he saw, with no pleasant feeling, that Castelle was not only well received, when he occasionally came there at the same hours, but also discovered that this hated foreigner had become a constant guest in the evenings, although Miss Somerton admitted no other visitors now that Madame D'Albremont was absent.

After many interviews and various hints on the subject that most engrossed him, Sir Harry one day asked Miss Williams to grant him a private interview, and accord-

ingly she received him at an hour when Agnes was engaged with an artist from whom she frequently took lessons. Miss Williams, soon appearing in a loose cover of grey linen, was not at all likely to forward his suit, being the last person in the world to encourage such pretensions as his. So on stating his object, and expressing great admiration for Agnes, Miss Williams said, emphatically—

“ You have already made Miss Somerton acquainted with your wishes, Sir Harry, and, if I mistake not, at Rome received an unqualified rejection of your suit.”

“ Yes,” he answered, “ I did most injudiciously then make a proposal upon a short acquaintance; but a year and a half have elapsed since that time, and I am now justified in repeating it, after our prolonged acquaintance, and the kindness with which she has ever received me.”

“ You are all alike, you conceited men,” said Miss Williams, “ never believing that

any woman can refuse you. We may display the vanity in manner and dress of which you are so ready to accuse us; but you betray a much more assuming degree of it by offering yourselves without pretension or encouragement to the most superior women."

"I allow, Miss Williams," said Sir Harry, very much nettled, "that no lady whom I ever met equals Miss Somerton, and it is with humility I—"

"Oh," interrupted Miss Williams, "when I said superiority I did not mean worth or talent; I alluded to superiority of fortune or position. I daresay you know plenty of *superior* women without either, whose hand you will never think of soliciting."

Sir Harry, still more hurt at this observation, replied—

"I do not ask your advice, Miss Williams, as to whom I am to marry, but merely request you to be an ambassadress to Miss Somerton, and express my hope that she will again permit me to offer her

my hand, and with it the very warm affection which has resulted from our prolonged intercourse."

"You need not take the trouble," said Miss Williams; "Agnes does not dream of marrying just now, and agrees with me that under most circumstances a single life is the happiest."

"You cannot think so, my dear Miss Williams; with your good sense, you never can come to such a conclusion," said Sir Harry, sarcastically.

"And why not, pray, Sir Harry? Does not an unmarried woman escape two-thirds of the misfortunes of life? She can neither be plagued with the temper, nor injured by the bad conduct of a husband; nor has she the loss of a good one to dread or to deplore. Sickly children don't give her sleepless nights, or healthy ones disturb her days. Dull, weakly progeny, you know, are proverbially good—"too good to live"—and intelligent robust ones are wilful, and often ill-conducted."

“What an alternative, Miss Williams,” said Sir Harry.

“Oh, you have not heard half my catalogue of married miseries,” continued Miss Williams. “After spending many wretched days and nights anxiously watching the inevitable succession of infantile complaints, education next perplexes you. Johnny’s fingers won’t write, and Tommy’s intellects are not equal to the conjugation of Latin verbs. Anna Maria has no ear for music, nor Amelia an eye for drawing. The boys prefer the professions in which you cannot advance them, or choose to do nothing at all. Johnny takes to hunting instead of the Church, for which you particularly intended him, as his enunciation is naturally defective.”

“What a list of disabilities,” laughingly said Sir Harry, recovering his good humour.

“Wait!” continued Miss Williams, “I have not done yet. They are all to marry,

you know; the girls look for sentimental poverty, and your eldest son, with a Solomonian disregard for wealth, of which you find years a great corrective, marries a curate's daughter; while the second boy informs you of his unalterable attachment to his cousin Mary, who was always visiting at the house, and with whom it never occurred to you that he could fall in love. 'Whoever would have thought that Mary fancied Henry?' is the exclamation of many a foolish mother who has allowed the young people to be constantly in each other's company. Now tell me, Sir Harry, what are a single woman's troubles? In your estimation, of course, the privation of a husband, which male vanity will declare to be an equivalent to——"

But here a servant came to summon Miss Williams to Mrs. de Belleville, and Sir Harry, very glad to escape from a continuance of the harangue, and provoked at her contemptuous reception of his mission,

took up his hat, and made a bow as respectful as if he did not hate the lady to whom it was addressed. Frivolous, passably good-natured, and very selfish, his rancour was but transient, for he would not allow anything to trouble him long, and having been provoked by Miss Williams to make a testy remark, he now lamented for a moment this outbreak of a well-trained temper.

With much regret Agnes heard of the proposal which Miss Williams reported to her, but at the same time she felt that its rejection would not disturb Sir Harry's usual equanimity or deprive her of his visits, to which she had now become accustomed. She knew that pecuniary failures had induced him to start as a popular man, and thus to adopt the most arduous of professions, in which he was bound to please everybody by contradicting nobody, to look happy between the fierce pangs of tooth-ache, to fondle the ugly babies of pretty mothers, to listen to the piteous descriptions

of retrospective rheumatism, or anticipated catarrhs, mumbled by toothless dowagers—to dance with the unsuccessful *débutante*, and ward off unsuitable adorers from the handsome one, to turn beggar for his friends, and ask for every possible requirement, from a soup ticket, or a seat in a balloon, to a commission in the Guards, or a place at Court. Half the hardships which he had to endure and the virtues which he had to practise would have surpassed the sacrifices that once secured the palm of martyrdom for a popish mediæval adventurer.

CHAPTER XVII.

“Angels preserve my dearest father’s life;
Bless it with long, uninterrupted days!
Oh! may he live till time itself decay—
Till good men wish him dead, or I offend him.”

OTWAY.

SINCE Leonora’s return to Paris from the cottage near Clairville she had grown more industrious, now that her father’s late illness reanimated the affection which was lately yielding to a stronger feeling; she worked assiduously to secure all required comforts for him as well as for Ernest, who, improved in health, occasionally appeared more apprehensive of what was going on around him. His ameliorated mental state evinced itself very perceptibly, while increased affection for his relatives proved that the moral

sense was equally reviving. Mostly seated beside Leonora while she painted, now and then when she left the room he would put in touches that considerably enhanced the value of her pictures, while at her return he seemed to enjoy her astonishment and pleasure at detecting all he had effected with the magic touch of a master-hand. Then he used to sit for long intervals looking at his own beautiful Psyche, and sometimes weeping over his clasped hands, which he raised, as if invoking the spirit that had inspired it, for a restoration of his lost intellect.

As for the poor old man, he regained strength rapidly, and now took increased pleasure in Leonora's talent and beauty; she had greatly improved in the former, to the delight of her employer, who expressed much surprise at such rapid progress. Still, the vigorous exercise of her art did not overcome the insensate passion which, although recently in part superseded by

other feelings, still only slumbered under the narcotic influences of sorrow and sickness, for the chemist's presence banished all former good resolves, and ever interrupted her actual wholesome industry. Castelle called one evening, when it seemed as if the corrective which had acted so favourably on Leonora in one sense only prepared her in another for a renewal of the old evil. They had not met for months, and now he came cordially and kindly to apologize for a long absence, and to make proffers of future services; but the wily man had an object in this concession which Leonora could not detect, for the charm of his presence banished all other thoughts. His excuses she received kindly, and his compliments gladly, so he departed well pleased at the success of his visit, while Leonora, hurrying to her little room, sat there bewildered with the contending emotions which his presence had excited.

There is no doubt that, from circum-

stances which had come to her knowledge since we last heard of her, she began to doubt Castelle's engagement to Clelia, and now, with the credulity of affection, which is as irrational in its faith as unjust in its doubt; and with the impulsive decision of her nature, she discarded all the suspicions which had lately irritated her. He may have absented himself to resent them, she thought; and in the excitement of pleasure at again seeing him she invented all kinds of plausible excuses for his conduct.

Aroused from the delightful reverie that his visit occasioned by the voice of her father, she was requited for the extra joyous alacrity with which she waited on him, when hearing Castelle extolled by the enthusiastic old man, who had read in his child's eyes the delight she experienced at receiving their long-absent friend. Villabella caressed her with more than the usual warmth, blessed her with more than the accustomed solemnity, and smilingly bade

her good night, conscious that the master cord, lately slackened, had again vibrated in her heart. That it might yet evoke the sympathetic harmonies of a happy life the old man prayed, as that night withdrawing his eyes from the light of her countenance, which was the sun of his life, he closed them on the outer world, to turn the mental vision inwards on bright pictures of the happy future which his fancy painted.

Castelle's name had not been uttered during the interview between Leonora and Agnes, who was quite ignorant of his acquaintance with the beautiful artist, and she, remembering the incidents of the past summer, never alluded to him. Next day Sir Harry brought a message from Miss Somerton with some direction about the ordered drawing which she had forgotten to explain clearly to Mademoiselle Villabella. Always a votary of beauty, he lingered after having executed his commission, with the pretext of examining the

paintings, but in reality to admire the handsome artist. Years never seem to lower a man's estimate of his attractions; and while most women of forty-five relinquish all hope of further conquests, a man twenty years their senior still fancies himself qualified to enslave any beautiful creature just stepping into her teens.

Leonora was not long in Sir Harry's company before she led the conversation to Miss Somerton's visit, anxious to confirm her hope that Castelle's intimacy at Clairville was one of friendship, and had never assumed a more tender character.

"Then Monsieur Castelle is a great favourite with all the ladies it seems," said she; "he was constantly with them in the country."

"A great favourite, indeed," answered Sir Harry, sneeringly; "he no doubt mesmerized them into the conviction that no one in existence equals him."

"I supposed that he was engaged to

the beautiful fair girl at the château, who is the most graceful person I ever beheld."

"She had been promised in another quarter," said Sir Harry.

"She looks very delicate, and has something sentimentally languid and abstracted in her air and expression that is inexpressibly engaging."

"Her health is not good," observed Sir Harry, "and most assuredly that ridiculous mesmerism has made it worse."

"I take a great interest in her," continued Leonora, "and wish exceedingly to see her again, for there is a strange story connected with her, revealed through some mysterious adventure, of which I learnt a few particulars accidentally."

"God bless me," ejaculated Sir Harry, "how do you know anything about her?"

Leonora, put on her guard by the earnestness with which this question was uttered, regretted that she had said so much, and no entreaty of Sir Harry would induce her

to be more explicit, nor could he with repeated questions extort any explanation of her assertion.

The baronet took leave of the beautiful artist, whose hints relative to Clelia had very much astonished him; he perceived her total ignorance of his relationship to Madame D'Albremont, and fearing that a knowledge of it might check all further revelations at another opportunity, he abstained from alluding to it. During a walk homewards he made guesses innumerable at the nature of this secret to which Leonora alluded; how should she have known anything of his niece? and what could have happened strange or mysterious to a young creature of eighteen, guarded by a wily dragon like Madame D'Albremont? Was it possible that Leonora knew more than he did of that nocturnal meeting in the summer-house? He walked thoughtfully through the Tuileries by a side path, and sat down under a tree in a retired spot to

ruminate on his affairs, and upon those of his sister, as connected with himself. This secret he felt assured was not in very close keeping; could it be connected with the mesmeric rule of Castelle? "I hate that fellow," said the veteran beau to himself, "he always comes in my way; and it is not enough for him to act Abelard to Agnes with the help of the Muses, but he is perhaps mixed up in some unwarrantable manner with this mystery which is attached to my niece. I am a most unlucky devil to be thwarted by such a scoundrel just when my opportunities for propitiating Agnes are so favourable.

"Here am I, a good-looking fellow, not very young to be sure, but having gained in manner and knowledge of society advantages equivalent to those which I have lost by years; well connected, received in the London great world, and a baronet, still likely to be supplanted by the mesmerism and humbug of this white Othello. These silly

females are always ready to be infatuated. They like something that terrifies them or shocks them, something that excites wonder or fear; a ranter threatening them with everlasting punishment for imaginary sins; a quack who promises to cure fatal diseases with which his ingenuity afflicts them; a bullying tyrant who threatens to thrash them, or a humbug like this Castelle who pretends to possess supernatural powers. Such are the men likely to captivate at least two-thirds of the women I have ever met with. A sensible, pleasant, gentlemanly fellow like myself will be rejected for a scamp, an adventurer, or an impostor. Miss Somerton's fortune would be well bestowed upon this visionary, who has ambitious views, I hear, and high aspirations to scientific renown, and is looking perhaps for the philosopher's stone, which he will indeed have found if he concocts in his laboratory some spell for appropriating Agnes's fortune."

Sir Harry would have harangued himself much longer on such an engrossing subject had he not been interrupted by Charles Breton, who at this moment advanced and took a seat beside him. After discussing the weather, and some other common-places, Sir Harry, still preoccupied with the subject of his recent meditation, by speaking of Vivian artfully introduced Castelle's name into the conversation; he was no more a favourite with Breton than with Sir Harry, so that each agreed with the other in depreciating the learned chemist.

"I am not less amazed than you are, Sir Harry," said the Frenchman, "at the way in which he has infatuated your friends. Vivian introduced him, and, of course, assured them that Castelle was the greatest man of our time."

"No doubt of it," said Sir Harry; "Vivian is entirely led by him: amiable, unsuspecting man, he will be his victim at last. Then the fellow has mesmerized my

niece into such submission to his commands that she consults him on every subject. Perhaps he ordered her to marry Vivian. I wonder, however, that he did so, for I believe that Frederick was once fool enough to make a will in Castelle's favour, leaving him the entire French property."

"That will not avail him much now," said Breton, "for Castelle is the elder of the two, and even did he survive, will be debarred from the inheritance by Vivian's marriage. Castelle certainly seems to exercise a strong influence over others as well as on your party, for Leonora Villabella, to whose studio I introduced you, is equally a victim to his attractions."

Sir Harry now listened eagerly, and asked, "Have they been long acquainted?"

"For years," replied Breton; "they met in Italy."

"Then 'tis a love-affair, constancy, and all that sort of thing," said Sir Harry.

"A very serious one, I believe, for she is

of a most exacting and vehement character, and on several occasions has been frantically jealous of the wonderful Castelle, believing in his occult power, and convinced that under his influence she experienced various phases of the mesmeric condition. He can put her into a trance without difficulty, and persuade her, justified by some absurd astrological prediction to that effect, that he rules her destiny."

"And does Castelle reciprocate this strong affection?"

"I think not; he may have been once in earlier life captivated with her great beauty and her unquestionable talent; but I fancy that he is now much annoyed by her very exacting constancy."

Sir Harry listened to Breton's further account of Castelle's and Leonora's tender friendship with open ears, determining to inform Agnes that her paragon occasionally amused himself by exciting the sympathies of young ladies in humbler

stations from whence he would never descend to select a wife. He also resolved on giving a colouring to this connexion which should alter her estimate of the immaculate Castelle, even at the expense of Leonora's good name.

Sir Harry found no opportunity that evening of making the revelation which he meditated, for Castelle just preceded him at Miss Somerton's little party. Very soon after the chemist's arrival, however, Miss Somerton inquired reproachfully why she had not heard from him of the beautiful artist, and how it was that he never gave her the very interesting particulars of Ernest D'Arval's misfortune which she with great interest just learnt from Sir Harry. The chemist was too much master of himself to betray any annoyance at finding that Agnes had become acquainted with Leonora, although nothing could be more annoying to him than their meeting. Making some excuse for the omission, he tried to change

the conversation; but Agnes still recurred to the interesting story of D'Arval's attachment to the unfortunate Eulalie, and its sad termination, speaking in terms of the greatest admiration of Leonora's tender kindness to her father, and of her very commendable attention to the poor imbecile cousin.

Very much annoyed at this result of the unlucky interview, Castelle took his leave. He had not visited Leonora for some time; nor had he intended to do so soon again; but now, anxiety as to the extent of her communications to Agnes prompted him to call upon her the next day. She was from home taking her father his usual walk in the Luxembourg Gardens, while Ernest remained in the house with Manon. Castelle, thinking that from the old woman he might hear some particulars of Agnes's interview with her mistress, walked into the studio, where Ernest was sitting, listlessly gazing as usual at his own painting. Manon knew little of

Miss Somerton's interview with Leonora. "She was a handsome lady, and beautifully dressed, and Sir Harry, whom she had seen before, looked grand, and yet seemed exceedingly civil."

Castelle was preparing to go, when he perceived a small but beautiful sketch of Agnes, which he at once knew that Ernest's pencil alone could have produced. The poor artist smiled at seeing it noticed, and Castelle with surprise perceived the intelligence of his countenance, which had lately assumed a different character from that of the stolid indifference so long fixed upon it. This improvement the chemist had partly anticipated, from a change that was apparent some time to him, though perhaps unnoticed by less acute observers. Castelle again looked at the drawing, and then laid it down on the table from which he had moved it, and soon after asking Ernest to bring him a glass of water, he drank it, and then departed, promising to call on M. Villabella the ensuing week.

Leonora, in a short time afterwards, returned from her walk. The old man had grown weary, and hung heavily on her arm as they ascended the stairs, for she had hurried home, being engaged to go that night to the opera with the wife of one of the performers, who offered her places in an upper box. It was not a pleasure which she often enjoyed, and on finding herself in the brilliant theatre, and on hearing the first grand crash of the overture to "Otello," her heart bounded with pleasure, and a thrill of delight passed through her frame. She was placed very high in the house, from whence was commanded a general view of most of the boxes beneath. At one part of the first scene, when Mademoiselle Amica was singing in a very harsh *seconda donna*'s voice, Leonora gladly looked around for pleasanter impressions than those received through her auditory sense, and just below, on the opposite tier, perceived Miss Somerton, accompanied by Miss Williams, both

engaged in conversation with some one at the back of their box.

Agnes seemed particularly animated, and Leonora, already prepossessed by the extreme intelligence of her countenance, and the graceful self-possession of her manner, looked on with interest, and wondered who was the third person by whom Miss Somerton appeared so much engrossed. She had not long to wait. The splendid countenance, on which she had so often surprised a look of dark gloom, now radiant with life and pleasure, bent forward, as seated opposite to Miss Somerton, Castelle leant towards her, in earnest conversation.

Leonora saw no more of the opera that night. The fascination of Castelle's presence diverted her from every other object. She gazed, and she watched, and she wondered; and when he came to sit behind Agnes's chair, and whispered into her willing ear, and played with the

flowers of her bouquet, and held her fan, and handed her bonbons, jealousy had brought back, with all its pangs, the frenzy of former times to the miserable Leonora. Where were now the promises she had made to forget him?—where was the calm that she commanded when he was not near? All good resolves, all healthy reasoning evaporated in the heat of that newly revived flame which seemed to scorch and consume her.

Agnes left the box. Leonora rushed out of hers, and looked down the stairs, from where she stood, as her rival descended leaning on Castelle's arm. She saw the tender care with which he wrapped a cloak about her; she noticed the admiring gaze and whispered words, that seemed to give her pleasure equal to his own; and then, as they descended lower, Leonora could no longer perceive them, but, with mesmeric sensitiveness, she felt the words and saw the look that was to

follow, with the second sight of nervous perception. That face haunted her, that smile galled her; and far into the night she saw it in busy dreams, attached to strange figures that flitted around her bed, breathing soft whispers, which she knew too well had just been spoken.

“Is she so fair? has she really the graceful profile that I admired? or does my fancy invest her with imaginary charms? But why should I doubt?—there is Ernest’s drawing, which has registered her look and air so exactly. Why should I doubt?” And starting from her bed, she darted into the room where Ernest had placed his sketch of Agnes. It was gone. She sought for it everywhere, in all the rooms, and then, rushing wildly to her cousin’s door, and knocking there, she asked him for the drawing of the young English lady. He would return no ready answer; but Manon, hearing Leonora’s voice, came from her room, and asked what disturbed them at this unusual time.

“Where is the drawing of Miss Somerton? Have you seen the sketch, Manon?”

The maid knew nothing of it. At last, hesitatingly, as if she dreaded to have her suspicions confirmed, Leonora whispered—

“Did Castelle perceive it?”

“Not that I know of, m’m’selle,” said the old woman. “But—now I remember he carried a roll of white paper in his hand as he went downstairs, which he did not bring with him. I can go and ask for it to-morrow.”

“Not for worlds; say not a word of it, Manon.”

And Leonora walked mournfully to her room.



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